PARADOXES OF DEFENCE,

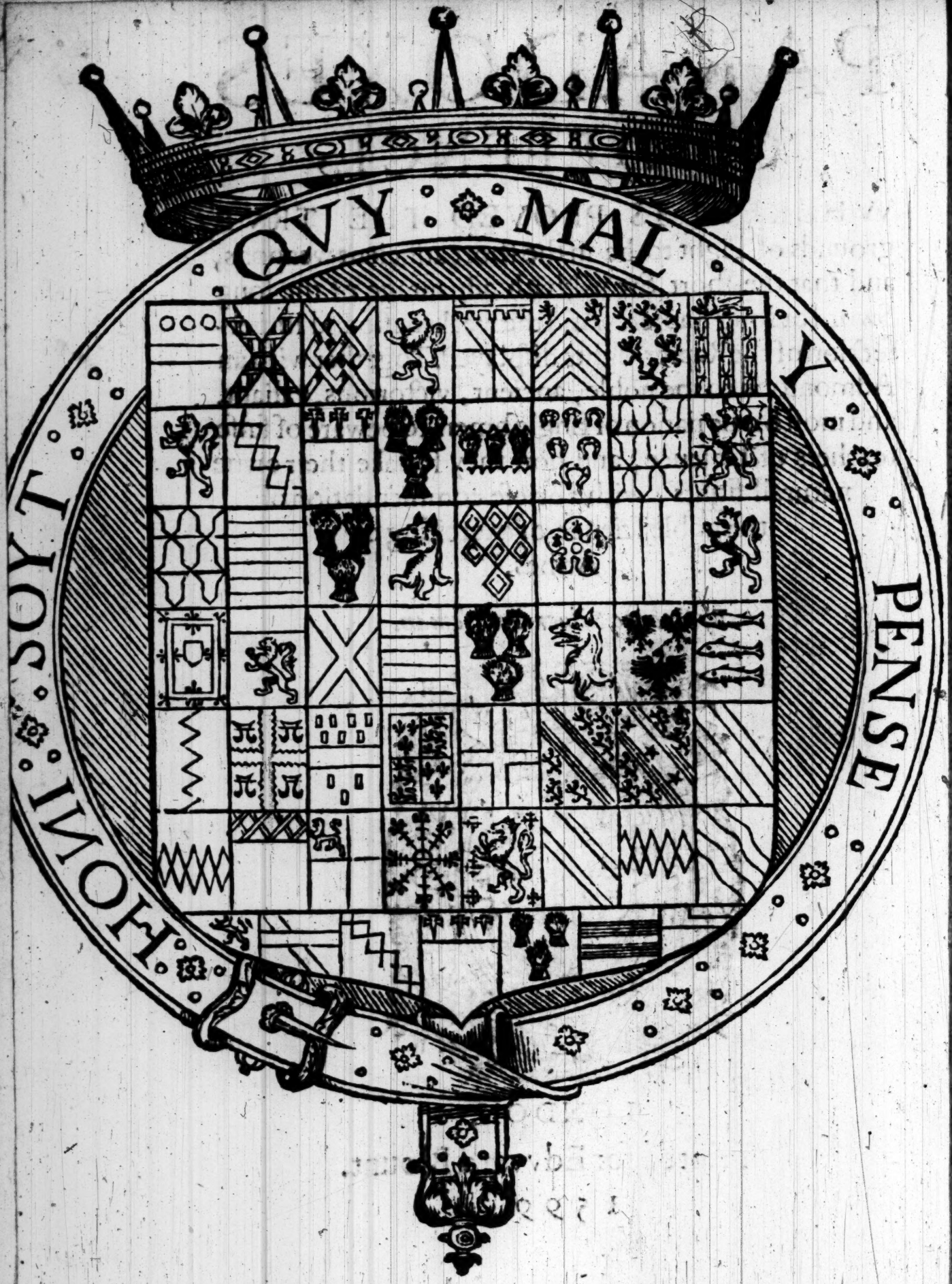
WHEREIN IS PROVED THE TRVE grounds of Fight to be in the ſhort anncient weapons, and that the ſhort Sword hath aduantage of the long Sword or long Rapier. And the weakeneſſe and imperfection of the Rapier-fights diſplayed. Together with an Admonition to the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant, and moſt braue nation of Engliſhmen, to beware of falſe teachers of Defence, and how they forſake their owne naturall fights: with a briefe commendation of the noble ſcience or exerciſing of Armes.

By George Siluer Gentleman.



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QVY · MAL · Y · PENSE
HONI · SOYT

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE, MY SINGVLAR GOOD LORD, ROBERT EARLE OF Essex and Ewe, Earle Marshall of England, Viscount Hereford, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, Bourchier *and Louaine, Maister of the Queenes Maiesties horse*, & of the Ordenance, Chancellor of the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, *Knight of the most noble order of the Garter, and one of her Highnesse most honorable Priuy Counsell.*

FENCING (Right honorable) in this new fangled age, is like our fashions, euerie daye a change, resembling the Camelion, who altereth himselfe into all colours saue white: so Fencing changeth into all wards saue the right. That it is so, experience teacheth vs: why it is so, I doubt not but your wisedome doth conceiue. There is nothing permanent that is not true, what can be true that is vncertaine? how can that be certaine, that stands vpon vncertain

grounds? The mind of man a greedie hunter after truth, finding the seeming truth but chaunging, not alwayes one, but alwayes diuerse, forsakes the supposed, to find out the assured certaintie: and searching euery where saue where it should, meetes with all saue what it would. VVho seekes & finds not, seekes in vaine; who seekes in vaine, must if he wil find seeke againe: and seeke he may againe and againe, yet all in vaine. VVho seekes not what he would, as he should, and where he should, as in all other things (Right honourable) so in Fencing: the mind desirous of truth, hunts after it, and hating falshood, flies from it, and therfore hauing missed it once, it assayes the second time: if then he thriues not, he tries another way: whē that hath failed he aduentures on the third: & if all these faile him, yet he neuer faileth to chaunge his weapon, his sight, his ward, if by any meanes he may compasse what he most affects: for because men desire to find out a true defence for themselues in their fight, therefore they seeke it diligently, nature hauing taught vs to defend ourselues, and Art teaching how: and because we misse it in one way we chaunge to another. But

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though we often chop and change, turne and returne, from ward to ward, from fight to fight, in this vnconstant search, yet wee neuer rest in anie, and that because we neuer find the truth: and therefore we neuer find it, because we neuer seeke it in that weapon where it may be found. For, to seeke for a true defence in an vntrue weapon, is to angle on the earth for fish, and to hunt in the sea for Hares: truth is ancient though it seeme an vpstart: our forefathers were wise, though our age account them foolish, valiant though we repute them cowardes: they found out the true defence for their bodies in short weapons by their wisdome, they defended themselues and subdued their enemies, with those weapons with their valour. And (Right honorable) if we will haue this true Defence, we must seeke it where it is, in short Swords, short Staues the halfe Pike, Partisans, Gleues, or such like weapons of perfect legths, not in long Swords, long Rapiers, nor frog pricking Poniards: for if there be no certain grounds for Defence, why do they teach it? if there be, why haue they not found it? Not because it is not: to say so, were to gainesay the truth: but because it is not cer-

English maisters of defence, are profitable members in the common wealth, if they teach with ancient English weapons of true Defence, weigh and conuenient length, within the compasse of the Statures and strength of men to command, because it maketh them safe, bold, valiant, hardie, strong and healthfull, and victorious in the warres, seruice of their Prince, defence of their friendes and countrey. But the Rapier in reason not to be taught, nor suffred to be taught, because it maketh men seare-full and vnsafe in single combat, and weak, & vnserueeable in the warres.

taine in those weapons which they teach. To proue this, I haue set forth these my Paradoxes, different I confesse from the maine current of our outlandish teachers, but agreeing I am well assured to the truth, and tending as I hope to the honor of our English nation. The reason which moued me to aduenture so great a taske, is the desire I haue to bring the truth to light, which hath long time lyen hidden in the caue of contempt, while we like degenerate sonnes, haue forsaken our forefathers vertues with their weapons, and haue lusted like men sicke of a strange ague, after the strange vices and deuises of Italian, French and Spanish Fencers, litle remembring, that these Apish toyes could not free Rome from Brennius sacke, nor Fraunce from King Henrie the fift his conqueſt. To this desire to find out truth the daughter of time, begotten of Bellona, I was also moued, that by it I might remoue the great losse of our English gallants, which we daily suffer by these imperfect fights, wherein none vndertake the combat, be his cause neuer so good, his cũning neuer so much, his strength and agilitie neuer so great, but his vertue was tied to fortune: happie man, happie

doale, kill or be killed is the dreadfull issue of this diuelliſh imperfect fight. If that man were now aliue, which beat the Maiſter for the ſcholers fault, becauſe he had no better inſtructed him, theſe Italian Fencers could not eſcape his cenſure, who teach vs Offence, not Defence, and to fight, as Diogenes ſcholers were taught to daunce, to bring their liues to an end by Art. VVas Aiax a coward becauſe he fought with a ſeuen foulded Buckler, or are we mad to go naked into the field to trie our fortunes, not our vertues? VVas Achilles a run-away, who ware that well tempered armour, or are we deſperat, who care for nothing but to fight, and learn like the Pigmeys, to fight with bodkins, or weapons of like defence? Is it valour for a man to go naked againſt his enemie? why then did the Lacedemonians puniſh him as deſperate, whom they rewarded for his vallour with a Lawrell crowne? But that which is moſt ſhamefull, they teach mē to butcher one another here at home in peace, wherewith they cannot hurt their enemies abrode in warre. For, your Honour well knowes, that when the battels are ioyned, and come to the charge, there is no roome for them

To this it will be obiected, that in the warres we vſe few Rapiers or none at all, but ſhort Swords. To that I anſwere: Thoſe are inſufficient alſo, for that they haue no

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to drawe their Bird-spits, and when they haue them, what can they doe with them? can they pierce his Corslet with the point? can they vnlace his Helmet, vnbuckle his Armour, hew a-sunder their Pikes with a *Stocata*, a *reuerſa*, a *Dritta*, a *Stramaſon*, or other ſuch like tẽpeſtuous termes? no, theſe toyes are fit for children, not for men, for ſtragling boyes of the Campe, to murder poultrie, not for men of Honour to trie the battell with their foes. Thus I haue (right Honorable) for the trial of the truth, betweene the ſhort Sword and the long Rapier, for the ſaning of the liues of our Engliſh gallants, who are ſent to certaine death by their vncertaine fights, & for abandoning of that miſchieuous and imperfect weapon, which ſerues to kill our frieds in peace, but cannot much hurt our foes in warre, haue I at this time giuen forth theſe Paradoxes to the view of the world. And becauſe I knowe ſuch ſtraunge opinions had need of ſtout defence, I humbly craue your Honorable protection, as one in whom the true nobility of our victorious Auncestors hath taken vp his reſidence. It will ſute to the reſt of your Honours moſt noble cõplements, to maintaine the defence of their

weapons

hilts, whereby they are inſufficient in their defence, and eſpecially for the hād, which being ſtroken although with a verie ſmal blow, moſt commonly is the loſſe of a mā, becauſe the force of his hand being taken from him, he is neither able to defend his life, nor greatly to offend his enemy: and againe, ſince the Rapier-fight hath bene taught, for lacke of practiſe they haue loſt the vſe of the blow.

weapons whose vertues you possesse knighted with your Honourable disposition, and reuiue with fauor what is prolonged vnto you, good with your Lordships gracious eye, to weigh with reason, what is fit for a shield in the vsuall point of your Honor, which will be your Lordship loue in your choice, to read the truth in whom so euer you find it, and to that which your Lordship hath of late begun to your vnspeakable honor and our inestimable benefite, to reduce the vnprofitable vvithhold vpon the hand, to the Rod and discipline, so long vsed among vs, to the end we may draw our armes, or vnlace their shields? I shall or any of these respectes, I rest assured that your Lordship vvill vouchsafe to receiue vvith fauor and maintaine vvith honour these Paradoxes of mine, vvhich if they be shrouded vnder so safe a shield, I vvill not doubt but to maintaine vvith reason amongst the vvise, and proue it by practise vpon the ignorant, that there is no certaine defence in the Rapier, and that there is great aduantage in the short Sword against the long Rapier, or all maner of Rapiers in generall, of vvhat length soeuer. And that the short Staffe

Why should we leaue the hand naked, since therby our limmes & liues are defended, our enemies discomforted, wounded, and executed? I see no reason but that the hand should be as well armed and prouided for, as anie other part of the bodie.

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hath the vauntage against the long staffe of twelue, fourteene, sixteene or eighteene foote long, or of what length soeuer. And against two men vvith their Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards & Gantlets, or each of them a case of Rapiers: vvhich vvhether I can performe or not, I submit for triall to your Honors martiall censure, being at all times readie to make it good, in vvhat maner, and against vvhat man soeuer it shall stand vvith your Lordships good liking to appoint. And so I humbly commend this booke to your Lordships vvisedome to peruse, and your Honour to the Highest to protect in all health and happinesse nowre and euer.

Your Honors in all dutie,

George Siluer.

AN

AN ADMONITION

TO THE NOBLE, ANCIENT, VICTORIOVS, VALIANT, AND MOST BRAVE NATION OF ENGLISHMEN.

George Siluer hauing the perfect knowledge of all maner of weapõs, and being experiẽced in all maner of fights, thereby perceiuing the great abuſes by the *Italian* Teachers of Offence done vnto them, the great errors, inconueniences, & falſe reſolutions they haue brought them into, haue inforced me, euen of pitie of their moſt lamentable wounds and ſlaughters, & as I verily thinke it my bounden dutie, with all loue and humilitie to admoniſh them to take heed, how they ſubmit themſelues into the hands of *Italian* teachers of Defence, or ſtraungers whatſoeuer; and to beware how they forſake or ſuſpect their owne naturall fight, that they may by caſting off of theſe Italianated, weake, fantaſticall, and moſt diuelliſh and imperfect fights, and by exerciſing of their owne ancient weapons, be reſtored, or atchieue vnto their natural, and moſt manly and victorious fight againe, the dint and force whereof manie

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braue nations haue both felt and feared. Our ploughmen haue mightily preuailed against them, as also against Maisters of Defence both in Schooles and countries, that haue taken vpon thē to stand vpon Schoole-trickes and iugling gambalds: whereby it grew to a common speech among the countrie-men, Bring me to a Fencer, I will bring him out of his fence trickes with good downe right blowes, I will make him forget his fence trickes I will warrant him. I speake not against Maisters of Defence indeed, they are to be honoured, nor against the Science, it is noble, and in mine opiniō to be preferred next to Diuinitie; for as Diuinitie preserueth the soule from hell and the diuell, so doth this noble Science defend the bodie from wounds & slaughter. And moreouer, the exercising of weapons putteth away aches, griefes, and diseases, it increaseth strength, and sharpneth the wits, it giueth a perfect iudgement, it expelleth melancholy, cholericke and euill conceits, it keepeth a man in breath, perfect health, and long life. It is vnto him that hath the perfection thereof, a most friendly and comfortable companion when he is alone, hauing but only his weapon about him, it putteth him out of all feare, & in the warres and places of most danger it maketh him bold, hardie, and valiant.

And for as much as this noble and most mightie nation of Englishmen, of their good natures, are alwayes most louing, verie credulous, & ready to cherish & protect strāgers: yet that through their good natures they neuer more by strangers or false teachers may be deceiued, once againe I am most humbly to admonish thē, or such as shal find in themselues a disposition or desire to learne their weapons of them, that from henceforth as

stran-

ſtrangers ſhall take vpon them to come hither to teach this noble & moſt valiant, & victorious nation to fight, that firſt, before they learne of them, they cauſe a ſufficient triall of them to be made, whether the excellencie of their skill be ſuch as they profeſſe or no, the triall to be very requiſite & reaſonable, euen ſuch as I my ſelfe would be contented withall, if I ſhould take vpon me to go in their countrie to teach their nation to fight. And this is the triall: they ſhall play with ſuch weapõs as they profeſſe to teach withall, three bouts apeece with three of the beſt Engliſh Maiſters of Defence, & three bouts apeece with three vnskilful valiant men, and three bouts apeece with three reſolute men half drunke. Then if they can defend thẽſelues againſt theſe maiſters of Defence, and hurt, and go free from the reſt, then are they to be honored, cheriſhed, and allowed for perfect good teachers, what countrey men ſoeuer they be: but if of anie of theſe they take foile, then are they imperfect in their profeſſion, their fight is falſe, & they are falſe teachers, deceiuers and murtherers, and to be puniſhed accordingly, yet no worſe puniſhment vnto them I wiſh, then ſuch as in their triall they ſhall find.

A great fauor to giue them choice of their weapon, becauſe profeſſors of armes ought to be skilfull with all maner of weapõs.

There are foure eſpeciall markes to know the Italian fight is imperfect & that the Italian teachers and ſetters forth of books of Defence, neuer had the perfection of the true fight.

The firſt marke is, they ſeldome fight in their owne country vnarmed, commonly in this ſort, a paire of Gantlettes vpon their hands, and a good ſhirt of maile vpon their bodies. 2

Yet they perſwade vs that the croſſe of the Rapier without hilt or gantlet is ſufficient.

The ſecõd marke is, that neither the Italians, nor any

of their beſt ſcholers do neuer fight, but they are moſt cõmonly ſore hurt, or one or both of them ſlaine.

The third matke is, they neuer teach their ſcholers, nor ſet downe in their bookes anie perfect lengthes of their weapons, without the which no man can by nature or Art againſt the perfect lẽgth fight ſafe, for being too ſhort, their times are too long, and ſpaces too wide for their defence, and being too long, they wilbe vpon euerie croſſe that ſhall happen to be made, whether it be done by skil or chance, in great danger of death; becauſe the Rapier being too long, the croſſe cannot be vndone in due time, but may be done by going backe with the feete; but that time is alwaies too long to anſwere the time of the hand, therfore euery man ought to haue a weapon according to his owne ſtature: the tall man muſt haue his weapon longer then the man of meane ſtature, or elſe he hath wrong in his defence, & the man of meane ſtature muſt haue his weapon longer then the man of ſmal ſtature, or elſe he hath wrong in his defence; & the man of ſmall ſtature muſt beware that he feed not himſelf with this vaine cõceipt, that he wil haue his weapon long, to reach as farre as the tall man, for therin he ſhal haue great diſaduantage, both in making of a ſtrong croſſe, and alſo in vncroſſing againe, and in keeping his point from croſſing, and when a croſſe is made vpon him, to defend himſelf, or indanger his enemie, or to redeeme his loſt times. Againe Rapiers longer, then is conuenient to accord with the true ſtatures of men, are alwaies too long or too heauie to keepe their bodies in due time from the croſſe of the light ſhort ſword of perfect length, the which being made by the skilfull out of any of the foure true times, vpon any of the foure chiefe

Acti-

Actions, by reaſon of the vncertaintie & great ſwiftneſſe in any of theſe times, they are in great danger of a blow, or of a thruſt in the hand, arme, head, body, or face, & in euerie true croſſe in the vncroſſing, in great danger of a blow vpon the head, or a full thruſt in the bodie or face: and being taken in that time & place, the firſt mouer in vncroſſing ſpeedeth the Rapier man of imperfect lēgth, whether it be too long, too ſhort or too heauie, and goeth free himſelfe by the direction of his gouernours.

The fourth marke is, the croſſes of their Rapiers for true defence of their hands are imperfect, for the true cariage of the guardant fight, without the which all fights are imperfect.

Of ſixe chiefe cauſes, that many valiant men thinking themſelues by their practiſes to be skilfull in their weapons, are yet manie times in their fight ſore hurt, and manie times ſlaine by men of ſmall skill, or none at all.

THe firſt and chiefeſt cauſe is, the lacke of the foure Gouernours, without the which it is impoſſible to fight ſafe, although a man ſhould practiſe moſt painfully and moſt diligently all the daies of his life. 3

The ſecond cauſe is, the lacke of knowledge in the due obſeruance of the foure Actions, the which we cal bent, ſpent, lying ſpent, and drawing backe: theſe Actions euerie man fighteth vpon, whether they be skilfull or vnskilfull, he that obſerueth them is ſafe, he that obſerueth thē not, is in cōtinuall danger of euerie thruſt that ſhalbe ſtrongly made againſt him.

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The third cauſe is, they are vnpractiſed in the foure true times, neither do they know the true times frō the falſe: therefore the true choiſe of their times are moſt commonly taken by chance, and ſeldome otherwiſe.

The fourth cauſe is, they are vnacquainted out of what fight, or in what maner they are to anſwer the variable fight: and therefore becauſe the variable fight is the moſt eaſieſt fight of all other, moſt cōmonly do anſwer the variable fight with the variable fight, which ought neuer to be but in the firſt diſtance, or with the ſhort Sword againſt the long, becauſe if both or one of them ſhall happen to preſe, and that in due time of neither ſide fight be changed, the diſtance, by reaſon of narrowneſſe of ſpace, is broken, the place is won and loſt of both ſides, then he that thruſteth firſt, ſpeedeth: if both happen to thruſt together, they are both in dāger. Theſe things ſometimes by true times, by change of fights, by chance are auoided.

The fift cauſe is, their weapons are moſt commonly too long to vncroſſe without going backe with the feet.

The ſixt cauſe is, their weapons are moſt commonly too heauie both to defend and offend in due time, & by theſe two laſt cauſes many valiāt mē haue loſt their liues

What is the cauſe that wiſemen in learning or practiſing their weapons, are deceiued with Italian Fencers.

No fight perfect that is not done in force & true time.

THere are foure cauſes: the firſt, their ſchoolmaiſters are imperfect: the ſecond is, that whatſoeuer they teach, is both true & falſe; true in their demōſtrations, according with their force & time in gētle play, & in their actions

actions according with true force & time in rough play or fight, false: for exãple, there is as much difference betwixt these two kind of fights, as there is betwixt the true picture of Sir *Beuis* of *Southampton*, & Sir *Beuis* himself, if he were liuing. The third, none cã iudge of the Craft but the Crafts-man; the vnskilfull, be he neuer so wise, can not truly iudge of his teacher, or skill, the which he learneth, being vnskilful himselfe. Lastly, & to confirme for truth all that shal be amisse, not only in this excellẽt Science of Defence, but in all other excellent secrets, most commonly the lye beareth as good a shew of truth, as truth it selfe.

Of the false resolutions and vaine opinions of Rapier-men, and of the danger of death thereby ensuing.

IT is a great question, & especially amõgst the Rapier-men, who hath the vantage of the thruster, or of the warder. Some hold strongly, that the warder hath the vantage: others say, it is most certain that the thruster hath the vantage. Now when two do happẽ to fight, being both of one mind, that the thruster hath the vantage, they make all shift they can, who shall giue the first thrust: as for example, two Captaines at *Southampton* euen as they were going to take shipping vpon the key, fel at strife, drew their Rapiers, and presently, being desperate, hardie or resolute, as they call it, with all force and ouer great speed, ran with their rapiers one at the other, & were both slaine. Now when two of the contrary opinion shall meet and fight, you shall see verie peaceable warres betweene them: for they verily thinke that he 4

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that firſt thruſteth is in great danger of his life, therefore with all ſpeede do put themſelues in ward, or Stocata, the ſureſt gard of all other, as *Vincentio* ſaith, and therevpon they ſtand ſure, ſaying the one to the other, thruſt and thou dare; and ſaith the other, thruſt and thou dare, or ſtrike or thruſt and thou dare, ſaith the other: then ſaith the other, ſtrike or thruſt and thou dare for thy life. Theſe two cunning gentlemen ſtanding long time together, vpon this worthie ward, they both depart in peace, according to the old prouerbe: It is good ſleeping in a whole skinne. Againe if two ſhall fight, the one of opinion, that he that thruſteth hath the vantage, and the other of opinion, that the warder hath the vantage, then moſt commonly the thruſter being valiant, with all ſpeed thruſteth home, and by reaſon of the time and ſwift motion of his hand, they are moſt commonly with the points of their rapiers, or daggers, or both, one or both of them hurt or ſlaine; becauſe their ſpaces of defence in that kind of fight, are too wide in due time to defend, and the place being wonne, the eye of the Patient by the ſwift motion of the Agents hand, is deceiued. Another reſolution they ſtand ſure vpon for their liues, to kill their enemies, in the which they are moſt commonly ſlaine themſelues: that is this: When they find the point of their enemies rapier out of the right line, they ſay, they may boldly make home a thruſt with a *Paſſata*, the which they obſerue, and do accordingly: but the other hauing a ſhorter time with his hand, as nature manie times teacheth him, ſodainly turneth his wriſt, whereby he meeteth the other in his paſſage iuſt with the point of his rapier in the face or body. And this falſe reſolution hath coſt manie a life.

That the cauſe that manie are ſo often ſlaine, and manie ſore hurt in fight with long Rapiers, is not by reaſon of their dangerous thruſts, nor cunningneſſe of that Italienated fight, but in the length and vnweildineſſe thereof.

IT is moſt certaine, that men may with ſhort ſwords both ſtrike, thruſt, falſe and double, by reaſon of their diſtance and nimbleneſſe thereof, more dangerouſly then they can with long Rapiers: and yet when two fight with ſhort ſwordes, hauing true fight, there is no hurt done: neither is it poſſible in anie reaſon, that anie hurt ſhould be done betwixt them of either ſide, and this is well knowne to all ſuch as haue the perfection of true fight. By this it plainely appeareth, that the cauſe of the great ſlaughter, and ſundrie hurts done by long Rapiers, conſiſteth not in long Reach, dangerous thruſtes, nor cunningneſſe of the Italian fight, but in the inconuenient length, and vnweildineſſe of their long Rapiers: whereby it commonly falleth out, that in all their Actions appertaining to their defence, they are vnable, in due time to performe, and continually in danger of euerie croſſe, that ſhall happen to be made with their rapier blades, which being done, within the halfe rapier; (vnleſſe both be of one mind with all ſpeed to depart, which ſeldome or neuer hapneth betweene men of valiant diſpoſition,) it is impoſſible to vncroſſe, or get out, or to auoid the ſtabbes of the Daggers. And this hath falne out manie times amongſt valiant men at thoſe weapons.

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Of running and ſtanding faſt in Rapier fight, the runner hath the vantage.

6 IF two valiant men do fight being both cunning in running, & that they both vſe the ſame at one inſtant, their courſe is doubled, the place is wonne of both ſides, and one or both of them will commonly be ſlaine or ſore hurt: and if one of them ſhall runne, and the other ſtand faſt vpon the *Imbrocata* or *Stocata*, or howſoeuer, the place wilbe at one inſtant wonne of one ſide, and gained of the other, and one or both of them wilbe hurt or ſlaine: if both ſhall preſe hard vpon the guard, he that firſt thruſteth home in true place, hurteth the other: & if both thruſt together, they are both hurt: yet ſome vantage the runner hath, becauſe he is an vncertaine marke, and in his motion: the other is a certaine marke, and in a dead motion: and by reaſon thereof manie times the vnskilfull man taketh vantage he knoweth not how, againſt him that lyeth watching vpon his ward or *Stocata* guard.

Of ſtriking and thruſting both together.

7 IT is ſtrongly holden of manie, that if in fight they find their enemy to haue more skill then themſelues, they preſently will continually ſtrike, & thruſt iuſt with him, whereby they will make their fight as good as his, and thereby haue as good aduantage as the other with all his skill: but if their ſwordes be longer then the other, then their aduantage is great; for it is

certaine

certaine (say they) that an inch will kill a man: but if their swordes be much longer then the other, then their aduantage is so great, that they wilbe sure by thrusting and striking iust with the other, that they will alwaies hurt him that hath the short sword, and go cleare themselues, because they will reach him, when he shall not reach them. These men speake like such as talke of Robin Hoode, that neuer shot in his bow; for to strike or thrust iust together with a man of skill, lyeth not in the will of the ignorant, because the skilfull man alwaies fighteth vpon the true times, by the which the vnskilfull is still disappointed of both place and time, and therefore driuen of necessitie still to watch the other, when & what he will doe; that is, whether he will strike, thrust, or false: if the vnskilfull strike or thrust in the time of falsing, therein he neither striketh nor thrusteth iust with the other: he may saie, he hath stroke or thrust before him, but not iust with him, nor to anie good purpose; for in the time of falsing, if he strike or thrust, he striketh or thrusteth too short: for in that time he hath neither time nor place to strike home, and as it is said, the vnskilfull man, that will take vpon him to strike or thrust iust with the skilfull, must first behold what the man of skil will doe, and when he will doe it, and therfore of necessitie is driuen to suffer the skilfull man to be the first mouer, and entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thrust, the truth therof in reason cannot be denied. Now iudge whether it be possible for an vnskilfull man to strike or thrust iust together with a man of skill; but the skilfull man can most certainly strike and thrust iust together with the vnskilfull, because the vnskilfull fighteth vpon false times, which being too long

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to answere the true times, the skilfull fighting vpon the true times, although the vnskilfull be the first mouer, & entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thrust; yet the shortnesse of the true times maketh at the pleasure of the skilfull a iust meeting together: in perfect fight two neuer strike or thrust together, because they neuer suffer place nor time to performe it.

Two vnskilfull men manie times by chance strike and thruste together, chance vnto them, because they know not what they doe, or how it commeth to passe: but the reasons or causes be these. Sometimes two false times meet & make a iust time together, & sometimes a true time and a false time meeteth and maketh a iust time together, and sometimes two true times meet and make a iust time together. And all this hapneth because the true time and place is vnknowne vnto them.

George Silver his resolution vpon that hidden or doubtfull question, who hath the aduantage of the Offender or Defender.

8 The aduantage is strongly holden of many to be in the offender, yea in somuch, that if two minding to offend in their fight, it is thought to be in him that first striketh or thrusteth. Others strongly hold opinion that the warder absolutely hath still the aduãtage, but these opinions as they are contrary the one to the other: so are they contrarie to true fight, as may well be seene by these short examples. If the aduantage be in the warder, then it is not good anie time to strike or thrust: if the aduantage be in the striker or thruster, then were it

a friuolous

a friuolous thing to learne to ward, or at anie time to seeke to ward, since in warding lieth disaduantage. Now may it plainly by these examples appeare, that if there be anie perfection in fight, that both sides are deceiued in their opinions, because if the striker or thruster haue the aduantage, then is the warder still in danger of wounds or death. And againe, if the warder hath the aduantage, then is the striker or thruster in as great daunger to defend himselfe against the warder, because the warder from his wards, taketh aduantage of the striker or thruster vpon euerie blow or thrust, that shall be made against him. Then thus I conclude, that if there be perfection in the Science of Defence, they are all in their opinons deceiued; and that the truth may appeare for the satisfaction of all men, this is my resolution: there is no aduantage absolutely, nor disaduantage in striker, thruster, or warder: and there is a great aduantage in the striker thruster & warder: but in this maner, in the perfection of fight the aduantage consisteth in fight betweene partie and partie: that is, whosoeuer winneth or gaineth the place in true pace, space and time, hath the aduantage, whether he be striker, thruster or warder. And that is my resolution.

Of Spanish fight with the Rapier.

THe *Spaniard* is now thought to be a better man with his Rapier then is the Italian, Frenchman, high Almaine, or anie other countrie man whatsoeuer, because they in their Rapier-fight stand vpon so manie intricate trickes, 9

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that in all the course of a mans life it shall be hard to learne them, and if they misse in doing the least of them in their fight, they are in danger of death. But the *Spaniard* in his fight, both safely to defend himselfe, and to endanger his enemie, hath but one onely lying, and two wards to learne, wherein a man with small practise in a verie short time may become perfect.

This is the maner of Spanish fight, they stand as braue as they can with their bodies straight vpright, narrow spaced, with their feet continually mouing, as if they were in a dance, holding forth their armes and Rapiers verie straight against the face or bodies of their enemies: & this is the only lying to accomplish that kind of fight. And this note, that as long as any man shall lie in that maner with his arme, and point of his Rapier straight, it shall be impossible for his aduersarie to hurt him, because in that straight holding forth of his arme, which way soeuer a blow shall be made against him, by reason that his Rapier hilt lyeth so farre before him, he hath but a verie litle way to moue, to make his ward perfect, in this maner. If a blow be made at the right side of the head, a verie litle mouing of the hand with the knuckles vpward defendeth that side of the head or bodie, and the point being still out straight, greatly endangereth the striker: and so likewise, if a blow be made at the left side of the head, a verie small turning of the wrist with the knuckles downward, defendeth that side of the head and bodie, and the point of the Rapier much indangereth the hand, arme, face or bodie of the striker: and if anie thrust be made, the wards, by reason of the indirections in mouing the feet in maner of dauncing, as aforesaid, maketh a perfect ward, and still withall the

point

point greatly endangereth the other. And thus is the Spaniſh fight perfect: ſo long as you can keepe that order, and ſoone learned, and therefore to be accounted the beſt fight with the Rapier of all other. But note how this Spaniſh fight is perfect, and you ſhall ſee no longer then you can keepe your point ſtraight againſt your aduerſarie: as for example, I haue heard the like ieſt.

There was a cunning Doctor at his firſt going to ſea, being doubtfull that he ſhould be ſea-ſicke, an old woman perceiuing the ſame, ſaid vnto him: Sir, I pray, be of good comfort, I will teach you a tricke to auoid that doubt; here is a fine pibble ſtone, if you pleaſe to accept it, take it with you, and when you be on ſhip-bord, put it in your mouth, and as long as you ſhall keepe the ſame in your mouth, vpon my credit you ſhall neuer vomit: the Doctor beleeued her, and tooke it thankfully at her hands, and when he was at ſea, he began to be ſicke, whereupon he preſently put the ſtone in his mouth, & there kept it ſo long as he poſſibly could, but through his extreme ſickneſſe the ſtone with vomit was caſt out of his mouth; then preſently he remẽbred how the woman had mocked him, and yet her words were true.

Euen ſo a *Spaniard* hauing his Rapier point put by, may receiue a blow on the head, or a cut ouer the face, hand, or arme, or a thruſt in the body or face, and yet his Spaniſh fight perfect, ſo long as he can keepe ſtraight the point of his Rapier againſt the face or body of his aduerſarie: which is as eaſie in that maner of fight to be done, as it was for the Doctor in the extremity of his vomite to keepe the ſtone in his mouth.

Yet one other pretie ieſt more, ſcarce worth the rea-

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ding, in commendation of outlandish fight. There was an *Italian* teacher of Defence in my time, who was so excellent in his fight, that he would haue hit anie English man with a thrust, iust vpon any button in his doublet, and this was much spoken of.

Also there was another cunning man in catching of wildgeese, he would haue made no more ado, when he had heard them crie, as the maner of wildgeese is, flying one after another in rowes, but presently looking vp, would tell them, if there had bene a dosen, sixteene, twētie, or more, he would haue taken euerie one. And this tale was manie times told by men of good credit, and much maruelled at by the hearers: & the man that wold haue taken the wildgeese, was of good credite himselfe: marie they said, indeed he did neuer take anie, but at anie time when he had looked vp, and seene them flie in that maner, he would with all his heart haue taken thē, but he could no more tell how to do it, then could the cunning *Italian* Fencer tell how to hit an Englishman, with a thrust iust vpon any one of his buttons, when he listed.

Illusions for the maintenance of imperfect weapons & false fights, to feare or discourage the vnskilfull in their weapons, from taking a true course or vse, for attaining to the perfect knowledge of true fight.

10 FIrst, for the Rapier (saith the *Italian*, or false teacher) I hold it to be a perfect good weapō, because the crosse hindreth not to hold the handle in the hand, to thrust both far & straight, & to vse all maner of aduantages in the wards,

Or

or ſodainly to caſt the ſame at the aduerſarie, but with the Sword you are driuen with all the ſtrength of the hand to hold faſt the handle. And in the warres I would wiſh no friend of mine to weare Swords with hilts, becauſe when they are ſodainly ſet vpon, for haſte they ſet their hands vpon their hilts inſteed of their handles: in which time it hapneth manie times before they can draw their ſwords, they are ſlaine by their enemies. And for Sword and Buckler fight, it is imperfect, becauſe the buckler blindeth the ſight, neither would I haue anie man lie aloft with his hand aboue his head, to ſtrike found blowes: Strong blowes are naught, eſpecially being ſet aboue the head, becauſe therein all the face and bodie is diſcouered. Yet I confeſſe, in old times, when blowes were only vſed with ſhort Swords & bucklers, & back Sword, theſe kind of fights were good & moſt mãly, but now in theſe daies fight is altered. Rapiers are lõger for aduãtage thẽ ſwords were wõt to be: whẽ blowes were vſed, men were ſo ſimple in their fight, that they thought him to be a coward, that would make a thruſt or ſtrike a blow beneath the girdle. Againe, if their weapõs were ſhort, as in times paſt they were, yet fight is better looked into in theſe dayes, than then it was. Who is it in theſe daies ſeeth not that the blow cõpaſſeth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to go; but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, and therefore commeth a nearer way, and done in a ſhorter time thẽ is the blow, and is more deadly then is the blow? Therefore there is no wiſe man that will ſtrike, vnleſſe he be wearie of his life. It is certaine, that the point for aduantage euerie way in fight is to be vſed, the blow is vtterly naught, and not to be vſed. He that fighteth vpon the

These counterfeit ſhews are enough to cary the wiſeſt that know not the true fight frõ the falſe, out of the right way.

And if their weapons were ſhort, as in times paſt they were, yet they could not thruſt ſafe at body or face, becauſe in gardant fight they fall over, or vnder the perfect croſſe of the ſword & to ſtrike beneath the waſte, or at the legges, is great diſaduantage, becauſe the courſe of the blow to the legs is too far, & therby the head, face, & body is diſcouered: and that was the cauſe in old time, that they did not thruſt nor ſtrike at the legs, & not for lacke of ſkill,

as in these daies we imagine. Againe, if a man in those daies shold haue fought with a long sword, they would presently haue put him into Cobbes Trauers.

blow especially with a short sword, wilbe sore hurt or slaine. The deuill can say no more for the maintenance of errors.

That a blow commeth continually as neare a way as a thrust, and most commonly nearer, stronger, more swifter, and is sooner done.

11 *A confutation of their errours.*

THe blow, by reaſō that it compaſſeth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to come, as the Italian Fenſer ſaith, & that the thruſt paſſing in a ſtraight line, commeth a nearer way, and therefore is ſooner done then a blow, is not true: theſe be the proofes.

Let two lie in their perfect ſtrengths and readineſſe, wherein the blades of their Rapiers by the motion of the body, may not be croſſed of either ſide, the one to ſtrike, and the other to thruſt. Then meaſure the diſtance or courſe wherein the hand and hilt paſſeth to finiſh the blow of the one, and the thruſt of the other, and you ſhall find them both by meaſure, in diſtance all one. And let anie man of iudgement being ſeene in the exerciſe of weapons, not being more addicted vnto nouelties of fight, then vnto truth it ſelfe, put in meaſure, and practiſe theſe three fights, variable, open, and guardant, and he ſhall ſee, that whenſoeuer anie man lyeth at the thruſt vpon the variable fight, (where of neceſſitie moſt commonly he lyeth, or otherwiſe not poſſiblie to keepe his Rapier from croſſing at the blow & thruſt, vpon the open or gardant fight,) that the blowes & thruſtes from theſe two fightes, come a nearer way, and a more

ſtronger

ſtronger and ſwifter courſe then doth the thruſt, out of the variable fight. And thus for a generall rule, whereſoeuer the Thruſter lyeth, or out of what fight ſoeuer he fighteth, with his Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger, the blow in his courſe commeth as neare, and nearer, and more ſwift and ſtronger then doth the thruſt.

Perfect fight ſtandeth vpon both blow and thruſt, therefore the thruſt is not onely to be vſed.

THat there is no fight perfect without both blow and thruſt: neither is there anie certaine rule to be ſet downe for the vſe of the point onely, theſe be the reaſons: In fight there are manie motions, with the hand, bodie, and feet, and in euerie motion the place of the hand is altered, & becauſe by the motions of the hand, the altering of the places of the hand, the changes of lyings, wards, and breaking of thruſtes, the hand will ſometimes be in place to ſtrike, ſome times to thruſt, ſometimes after a blow to thruſt, and ſometimes after a thruſt to ſtrike, & ſometimes in place where you may ſtrike, and cannot thruſt without loſſe of time, and ſometimes in place where you may thruſt, and cannot ſtrike without loſſe of time, and ſometimes in place where you can neither ſtrike nor thruſt, vnleſſe you fight vpon both blow and thruſt, nor able to defend your ſelfe by ward or going backe, becauſe your ſpace wilbe too wide, and your diſtance loſt. And ſometimes when you haue made a thruſt, a ward or breaking is taken in ſuch ſort with the Dagger or blade of the Sword, that you cã neither thruſt againe, nor defend your ſelfe vnleſſe you do ſtrike, which 12

This in truth cannot be denied.

your my ſoundly doe, and go free, and ſometimes when you ſtrike, a ward wilbe taken in ſuch ſort, that you cannot ſtrike againe, nor defend your ſelfe, vnleſſe you thruſt, which you may ſafely doe and goe free. So to conclude, there is no perfection in the true fight, without both blow and thruſt, nor certaine rule to be ſet downe for the point onely.

That the blow is more dangerous and deadly in fight then a thruſt, for proofe thereof to be made according with Art, an Englishman holdeth argument againſt an Italian.

Italian.

13 WHich is more dangerous or deadly in fight of a blow or a thruſt?

Englishman.

This queſtion is not propounded according to art, becauſe there is no fight perfect without both blow and thruſt.

Italian.

Let it be ſo, yet opinions are otherwiſe holden, that the thruſt is onely to be vſed, becauſe it commeth a nearer way, and is more dangerous and deadly, for theſe reaſons: firſt the blow compaſſeth round like a wheele, but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, therfore the blow by reaſon of the compaſſe, hath a longer way to go then the thruſt, & is therefore longer in doing, but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, therfore hath ſhorter way to go thē hath the blow, & is therfore done in a ſhorter time, & is therfore much better then the blow, & more dangerous and deadly, becauſe if a thruſt do hit the face or bodie, it indangereth life, and moſt commonly death enſueth: but if the blow hit the bodie, it is not ſo dāgerous.

Englishman.

Englishman.

Let your opiniõs be what they wil, but that the thruſt cõmeth a nearer way; & is ſooner done then the blow, is not true: & for proofe thereof reade the twelfth Paradox. And now will I ſet downe probable reaſons, that the blow is better then the thruſt, and more dangerous and deadly. Firſt, the blow commeth as neare a way, & moſt cõmonly nearer then doth the thruſt, & is therfore done in a ſhorter time then is the thruſt: therfore in reſpect of time, wherupon ſtãdeth the perfection of fight, the blow is much better then the thruſt. Againe, the force of the thruſt paſſeth ſtraight, therefore any croſſe being indirectly made, the force of a child may put it by: but the force of a blow paſſeth indirectly, therefore muſt be directly warded in the counterchecke of his force: which cãnot be done but by the cõuenient ſtrength of a man, & with true croſſe in true time, or elſe wil not ſafely defẽd him: and is therfore much better, & more dãgerous thẽ the thruſt, and againe. The thruſt being made through the hand, arme, or leg, or in many places of the body and face, are not deadly, neither are they maimes, or loſſe of limmes or life, neither is he much hindred for the time in his fight, as long as the bloud is hot: for example.

The blow more dangerous then the thruſt.

I haue knowne a Gẽtlemã hurt in Rapier fight, in nine or ten places through the bodie, armes, and legges, and yet hath continued in his fight, & afterward hath ſlaine the other, and come home and hath bene cured of all his woũds without maime, & is yet liuing. But the blow being ſtrõgly made, taketh ſomtimes cleane away the hand from the arme, hath manie times bene ſeene. Againe, a full blow vpon the head or face with a ſhort ſharpe Sword, is moſt commonly death. A full blow vpon the

The blow cutteth off the hand, the arme, the leg, and ſometimes the head.

necke, ſhoulder, arme, or legge, indangereth life, cutteth off the veines, muſcles, and ſinewes, periſheth the bones: theſe wounds made by the blow, in reſpect of perfect healing, are the loſſe of limmes, or maimes incurable for euer.

And yet more for the blow: a ful blow vpon the head, face, arme, leg, or legs, is death, or the partie ſo wounded in the mercie of him that ſhall ſo wound him. For what man ſhall be able long in fight to ſtand vp, either to reuenge, or defend himſelfe, hauing the veines, muſcles, and ſinewes of his hand, arme, or leg cleane cut aſunder? or being diſmembred by ſuch wound vpon the face or head, but ſhall be enforced therby, and through the loſſe of bloud, the other a litle dallying with him, to yeeld himſelf, or leaue his life in his mercie?

He that giueth the firſt wound with a ſtrong blow, commaundeth the life of the other.

And for plainer deciding this cõtrouerſie betweene the blow and the thruſt, conſider this ſhort note. The blow commeth manie wayes, the thruſt doth not ſo. The blow commeth a nearer way then a thruſt moſt commonly, and is therefore ſooner done. The blow requireth the ſtrength of a man to be warded; but the thruſt may be put by, by the force of a child. A blow vpon the hand, arme, or legge is a maime incurable; but a thruſt in the hand, arme, or legge is to be recouered. The blow hath manie parts to wound, and in euerie of them commaundeth the life; but the thruſt hath but a few, as the bodie or face, and not in euerie part of them neither.

Of the difference betwixt the true fight & the false: wherin consisteth (the Principles being had with the direction of the foure Gouernors) the whole perfection of fight with all maner of weapons.

THe true fights be these: whatsoeuer is done with the hand before the foot or feet is true fight. The false fights be these: whatsoeuer is done with the foot or feet before the hand, is false, because the hand is swifter then the foot, the foot or feet being a slower mouer then the hand: the hand in that maner of fight is tied to the time of the foot or feet, and being tied thereto, hath lost his freedome, and is made thereby as slow in his motions as the foot or feet: and therfore that fight is false. 14

Of euill orders or customes in our English Fẽce-schooles, & of the old or ancient teaching of weapons, & things very necessarie to be continued for the auoiding of errors, and reuiuing and continuance of our ancient vveapons, and most victorious fight againe.

THere is in my opiniõ in our Fence-schooles an euill order or custome in these dayes vsed, the which, if it might stand with the good liking of our Maisters of Defence, I thinke it necessarie to be left: for as long as it is vsed, it shall be hard to make a good Scholler. 15

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That is this, at the ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, & Sword and Buckler, they forbid the thruſt, & at the ſingle Rapier, and Rapier & Dagger, they forbid the blow. Either they are both together beſt, or the thruſt altogether beſt, or the blow altogether beſt. If the thruſt be beſt, why do we not vſe it at the ſingle Sword, Sword & Dagger, & Sword and Buckler. If the blow be beſt, why do we not vſe it at the ſingle Rapier, Rapier & Poinyard? But knowing by the Art of Armes, that no fight is perfect without both blow and thruſt, why do we not vſe and teach both blow and thruſt? But howſoeuer this we dayly ſee, that whē two meet in fight, whether they haue skill or none, vnleſſe ſuch as haue tied thēſelues to that boyiſh, *Italian*, weake, imperfect fight, they both ſtrike and thruſt, and how ſhall he then do, that being much taught in ſchoole, neuer learned to ſtrike, nor how to defend a ſtrong blow? & how ſhall he thē do, that being brought vp in Fēce-ſchoole, that neuer learned to thruſt with the ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, and Sword and Buckler, nor how at theſe weapōs to breake a thruſt? Surely, I thinke a downe right fellow, that neuer came in ſchoole, vſing ſuch skill as nature yeeldeth out of his courage, ſtrength, and agilitie, with good downe right blowes and thruſts among, as ſhall beſt frame in his hands, ſhold put one of theſe imperfect ſchollers greatly to his ſhifts. Beſides, there are now in theſe dayes no gripes, cloſes, wreſtlings, ſtriking with the hilts, daggers, or bucklers, vſed in Fence-ſchooles. Our ploughmen by nature wil do all theſe things with great ſtrēgth & agility: but the Schooleman is altogether vnacquainted with theſe things. He being faſt tyed to ſuch ſchoolplay as he hath learned, hath loſt thereby the benefite

of

of nature, and the plowman is now by nature without art a farre better man then he. Therefore in my opinion, as long as we barre anie maner of play in schoole, we shall hardly make a good scholler: there is no maner of teaching comparable to the old ancient teaching, that is, first their quarters, then their wardes, blowes, thrusts, and breaking of thrustes, then their Closes and Gripes, striking with the hilts, Daggers, Bucklers, Wrastlings, striking with the foote or knee in the Coddes, and all these are safely defended in learning perfectly of the Gripes. And this is the ancient teaching, the perfectest & most best teaching; and without this teaching, there shall neuer scholler be made able, doe his vttermost, nor fight safe. Againe their swordes in schooles are too long by almost halfe a foote to vncrosse, without going backe with the feete, within distance or perfectly to strike or thrust within the halfe or quarter sword. And in seruing of the Prince, when men do meet together in publique fight, are vtterly naught and vnseruiceable. The best lengthes for perfect teaching of the true fight to be vsed and continued in Fence schooles, to accord with the true statures of all men, are these. The blade to be a yard and an inch for meane statures, and for men of tall statures, a yard and three or foure inches, and no more. And I would haue the Rapier continued in schooles, alwaies readie for such as shall thinke themselues cunning, or shall haue delight to play with that imperfect weapon. Prouided alwaies, that the Schoolemaister or Vsher play with him with his short Sword, plying him with all maner of fight according to the true art: this being continued the truth shall flourish, the lye shalbe beaten downe, and all nations not ha-

In the warres there is no obseruation of Stoccatas, Imbroccatas, times, nor answers.

Long weapons imperfect.

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uing the true ſcience, ſhall come with all gladneſſe to the valiant and moſt braue Engliſh maiſters of Defence to learne the true fight for their defence.

The grounds or Principles of true fight with all maner of weapons.

16 FIrſt Iudgement, Lyings, Diſtance, Direction, Paſe, Space, Place, Time, Indirection, Motion, Action, generall and continuall Motion, Progreſſion, Regreſſion, Trauerſing, and Treading of groundes, Blowes, Thruſtes, Faulſes, Doubles, Slipes, Wardes, breakings of Thruſts, Cloſings, Gripes, & Wraſtlings, Guardant fight, Open fight, Variable fight, and Cloſe fight, and foure Gouernours.

The wardes of all maner of weapons.

17 ALl ſingle weapons haue foure wardes, and all double weapons haue eight wardes. The ſingle ſword hath two with the point vp, and two with the point downe. The Staffe and all maner of weapons to be vſed with both handes haue the like.

The Sword and Buckler, and Sword and Dagger are double weapons, and haue eight wardes, two with the point vp, and two with the point downe, and two for the legges with the point downe, the point to be caried for both ſides of the legges, with the knuckles downeward, and two wardes with the Dagger or Buckler for the head. The Forreſt bill is a double weapon by reaſon

of

of the head, and therefore hath eight wardes, foure with the Staffe, foure with the head, foure of them to be vſed as with the ſtaffe, and the other foure with the head, the one vp, the other downe, and the other ſidewaies.

The names and numbers of times appertaining vnto fights both true and falſe.

THere are eight times, whereof foure are true, and foure are falſe: the true times be theſe. 18

The time of the hand.
The time of the hand and bodie.
The time of the hand, bodie and foote.
The time of the hand, bodie and feete.

The falſe times be theſe.

The time of the foote.
The time of the foote and bodie.
The time of the foote, bodie and hand.
The time of the feete, bodie and hand.

Thus haue I thought good to ſeparate and make knowne the true times from the falſe, with the true wardes thereto belonging, that thereby the rather in practiſing of weapons, a true courſe may be taken for the auoiding of errours and euill cuſtomes, and ſpeedie attaining of good habit or perfect being in the true vſe and knowledge of all maner of weapons.

Of the length of weapons, and how euerie man may fit himſelfe in the perfect length of his weapon, according to his owne ſtature, with briefe reaſons wherefore they ought to be ſo.

19 TO know the perfect length of your Sword, you ſhall ſtand with your ſword and dagger drawn, as you ſee this picture, keeping out ſtraight your dagger arme, drawing backe your ſword as far as conueniently you can, not opening the elbow ioynt of your ſword arme: and looke what you can draw within your dagger, that is the iuſt length of your ſword, to be made according to your owne ſtature.

If the ſword be longer, you can hardly vncroſſe without going backe with your feet. If ſhorter, thē you can hardly make a true croſſe without putting in of your feet, the which times are too long to anſwer the time of the hand.

The like reaſons for the ſhort ſtaffe, halfe Pike, Forreſt bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length.



AS I haue here made a figuratiue demonſtration, to know the perfect length of the Sword, as afore is ſayd; ſo haue I in the page following, for the plainer vnderſtanding of the Reader, ſet foorth a forme of ſtanding, to know the lengths of the ſhort Staffe, halfe Pike, Foreſt Bill, Partiſan and Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of aduantage, as ſhall alſo beſt fit the ſtatures of all men.

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The perfect length of your two hand sword is, the blade to be the length of the blade of your single sword.

To know the perfect length of your short staffe, or half Pike, Forrest bil, Partisan, or Gleue, or such like weapons of vantage and perfect lengths, you shall stand vpright, holding the staffe vpright close by your body, with your left hand reaching with your right hand your staffe as high as you can, and then allow to that length a space to set both your hands, when you come to fight, wherein you may conueniently strike, thrust, and ward, & that is the iust length to be made according to your stature. And this note, that these lengths will commonly fall out to be eight or nine foot long, and will fit although not iust, the statures of all men, without any hindrance at all vnto them in their fight, because in any weapon wherein the hands may be remoued, and at liberty, to make the weapon longer or shorter in fight at his pleasure, a foot of the staffe behind the backmost hand doth no harme.

And wherfore these weapons ought to be of the lengths aforesaid, and no shorter, these are the reasons. If they should be shorter, then the long staffe, Morris Pike, and such like weapons ouer and aboue the perfect length, should haue great vantage against that, because he may come boldly and safe without anie gard or ward, to the place where he may thrust home, and at euery thrust put him in danger of his life: but if these weapons be of their perfect lengths, then can the long staffe, the Morris Pike, or anie other longer weapon, by no where in true space, but shall be still within compasse of the crosse, to crosse and vncrosse, wherby he may safely passe home to the place, where he may strike or thrust him that hath the long weapon, in the head, face, or body at his pleasure, a

Of the lengths of the Battel axe, Halbard, or blacke Bill, or such like weapons of weight, appertaining vnto gard or battell.

20 IN anie of these weapons there needeth no iust length, but commonly they are, or ought to be fiue or sixe foot long, & may not well be vsed much longer, because of their weights: and being weapons for the warres or battell, when men are ioyned close together, may thrust, & strike sound blowes, with great force both strong and quicke: and finally for the iust lengths of all other shorter or longer weapons to be gouerned with both hands, there is none: neither is there anie certaine lengthes in anie maner of weapons to be vsed with one hand, ouer or vnder the iust length of the single sword.

Thus endeth the length of weapons.

Of the vantages of weapons in their kinds, places, & times, both in priuate and publike fight.

21 IRst I will begin with the worst weapon, an imperfect and insufficient weapon, and not worth the speaking of; but now being highly esteemed, therefore not to be left vnremembred; that is, the single Rapier, and Rapier and Poiniard.

The single Sword hath the vantage against the single Rapier.

The Sword and Dagger hath the vantage against the Rapier and Poiniard.

The

The Sword & Target hath aduãtage againſt the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Sword and Buckler hath aduantage againſt the Sword and Target, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The two hand Sword, hath the vantage againſt the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, or ſuch like weapons of weight, appertaining vnto guard or battell, are all one in fight, and haue aduantage againſt the two hand Sword, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Target, the Sword & dagger, or the Rapier & Poiniard.

The ſhort ſtaffe or halfe Pike, Forreſt-bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length, haue the vantage againſt the Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, the two hand ſword, the Sword and Target, and are too hard for two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, and for the long ſtaffe and Morris Pike.

The long Staffe, Morris Pike, or Iauelin, or ſuch like weapons aboue the perfect length, haue aduantage againſt all maner of weapons, the ſhort ſtaffe, Welch hooke, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of vantage excepted; yet too weake for two Swords and Daggers or two Swords and Bucklers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, becauſe they are too long, to thruſt, ſtrike, and turne ſpeedily: and by reaſon of the large diſtance, one of the Sword and Dagger-men will get behind him.

The Welch hooke or Forreſt bill, hath aduantage againſt all maner of weapons whatſoeuer.

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Yet vnderstand, that in battels, and where varietie of weapons be, amongst multitudes of men and horses, the Sword and Target, the two hand Sword, the Battel-axe, the Blacke-bill, and Halbard, are better weapons, and more dangerous in their offence and forces, then is the Sword and Buckler, short staffe, long staffe, or Forrest bill. The Sword and Target leadeth vpon Shot, and in troupes defendeth thrusts and blowes giuen by battel-axe, Halbards, Blacke-bill, or two hand swords, far better then can the Sword and Buckler.

The Morris Pike defendeth the battell from both horse and man, much better then can the short staffe, long staffe, or Forrest bill. Againe, the Battel-axe, the Halburd, the Blacke bill, the two hand sword, and Sword & Target, amongst armed men and troopes, when men are come together, by reason of their weighrs, shortnesse, and great forces, do much more offend the enemie, & are then much better weapons then is the short staffe, the long Staffe, or Forrest bill.

Of the insufficiencie and disaduantages of the Rapiers fight in Battell.

THe single Rapier, or Rapier & Poinard, they are imperfect & insufficient weapons: and especially in the seruice of the Prince, when men shall ioyne together, what seruice can a souldier do with a Rapier, a childish toy wherwith a man can do nothing but thrust, nor that neither, by reason of the length, and in euerie inbuing when blowes are a dealing, for lacke of a hilt is in daunger to haue his hand or arme cut off, or his head

cloue?

clouen. And for Wardes and Gripes, they haue done, neither can any of these fine Rapier men, for lacke of vse, tell howe to strike a sound blow.

Of the vantages and sufficiencie of the short Sword fight in battell.

THe short Sword, and Sword and Dagger, 23
are perfect good weapons, and especially in seruice of the Prince. What a braue weapon is a short sharpe light Sword, to carie, to draw, to be nimble withall, to strike, to cut, to thrust both strong and quicke. And what a goodly defence is a strong single hilt, when men are clustering and hurling together, especially where varietie of weapons be, in their motions to defend the hand, head, face, and bodies, from blowes, that shalbe giuen sometimes with Swordes, sometimes with two handed Swordes, battell Axe, Halbardes, or blacke Billes, and sometimes men shalbe so neare together, that they shall haue no space, scarce to vse the blades of their Swordes belowe their wastes, then their hilts (their handes being aloft) defendeth from the blowes, their handes, armes, heads, faces, and bodies; then they lay on, hauing the vse of blowes and Gripes, by force of their armes with their hilts, strong blowes, at the head, face, armes, bodies, and shoulders, and manie times in hurling together, scope is giuen to turne downe their points, with violent thrusts at their faces, and bodies, by reason of the shortnesse of their blades, to the mightie annoyance, discomfort, and great destruction of their enimies. One valiant man with a Sword in his hand, will doe better seruice, then ten *Italians*, or Italienated with the Rapiers,

That all maner of double weapons, or weapons to be vsed with both handes, haue aduantage against the single Rapier or single Sword, there is no question to be made.

That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage against the Sword and Dagger.

24 THe Dagger is an imperfect ward, although borne out straight, to make the Space narrow, whereby by a litle mouing of the hand, may be sufficient to saue both sides of the head, or to breake the thrust from the face or body, yet for lacke of the circumference his hand will lie too high or too low, or too weake, to defend both blow and thrust: if he lye straight with narrow space, which is best to breake the thrust, then he lieth too weake, and too lowe to defend his head from a strong blow: if he lye high, that is strong to defend his head, but then his space wilbe too wide to breake the thrust from his bodie. The Dagger serueth well at length to put by a thrust, and at the halfe Sword to crosse the Sword blade, to driue out the Agent, and put him in danger of his life, and safely in anie of these two actions to defend himselfe. But the Buckler, by reason of his circumference and weight, being well caried, defendeth safely in all times and places, whether it be at the point, halfe Sword, the head, bodie, and face, from all maner of blowes and thrustes whatsoeuer, yet I haue heard manie hold opinion, that the Sword and Dagger hath aduantage of the Sword and Buckler, at the Close, by reason of the length and point of the Dagger: and at the

point

point of the Sword, they can better see to ward them with a Buckler. But I neuer knew anie, that wanne the Close with the Dagger vpon the Sword and Buckler, but did wish himselfe out againe: for distance being broken, iudgement faileth, for lacke of time to iudge, and the eie is deceiued by the swift motion of the hand, and for lacke of true Space with the dagger hand, which cannot be otherwise, for lacke of the circumference to defend both blow and thrust, it is impossible for lacke of true Space in iust time, the agent hauing gotten the true place, to defend one thrust or blow of an hundred. And it is most certaine, whosoeuer closeth with Sword and Dagger, against the Sword and Buckler, is in great danger to be slaine. Likewise at the point within distance, if he stand to defend both blow and thrust with his Dagger, for lacke of true space and distance, if he had the best eye of anie man, and could see perfectly, which way the thrust or blow commeth, and when it commeth, as it is not to be denied but he may, yet his space being too large, it helpeth him nothing, because one mans hand being as swift as another mans hand, both being within distance, he that striketh or thrusteth, hurteth the warder: the reason is this: the Agent being in the first motion although in his offence, further to go then the warder to defend; yet the warders space being too large, the blow or thrust will be performed home, before the warder can come to the true place to defend himselfe, and although the warder doe perfectly see the blow or thrust comming, so shall he see his owne ward so farre from the true place of his defence, that although he doe at that instant time, plainly see the blow or thrust comming, it shalbe impossible for him to recouer the

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true place of his ward, till he be wounded. But let the warder with the dagger say, that it is not true which I haue said, for as he hath eies to behold the blow or thrust cõming, so hath he as good time to defend himself. Herein he shal find himself deceiued to; this is the reason: the hand is the swiftest motion, the foot is the slowest, without distance the hand is tied to the motion of the feet, wherby the time of the hand is made as slow as the foot, because thereby we redeeme euerie time lost vpon his comming by the slow motion of the foot, & haue time therby to iudge, whẽ & how he can performe any actiõ whatsoeuer, and so haue we the time of the hand to the time of the feet. Now is the hãd in his owne course more swifter then the foot or eye, therfore within distance the eye is deceiued, & iudgement is lost; and that is another cause that the warder with the dagger, although he haue perfect eyes, is stil within distance deceiued. For proofe that the hand is more swifter then the eye, & thereby deceiueth the eyes: let two stand within distance, & let one of them stand still to defend himself, & let the other florish & false with his hand, and he shall continually with the swift motions of his hand, deceiue the eyes of him that standeth watching to defend himselfe, & shal continually strike him in diuerse places with his hand. Againe, take this for an example, that the eyes by swift motions are deceiued: turne a turne-wheele swift, & you shall not be able to discerne with your best eies how many spokes be in the wheele, no nor whether there be any spokes at all, or whereof the wheele is made, and yet you see when the wheele standeth still there is a large distance betweene euerie spoke. He that will not beleeue that the swift motion of the hand in fight will deceiue the eye, shal stare a-

The eye is deceiued by the swift motion of the hãd.

broad

broad with his eyes, & feele himself soundly hurt, before he shall perfectly see how to defend himselfe. So those that trust to their sight, the excellẽcy of a good eye, their great cunning, & perfect wards of the daggers, that they can better see to ward then with a buckler, shall euer be deceiued. And whẽ they be wounded, they say the Agẽt was a litle too quicke for them; sometimes they say they bare their dagger a litle too low: sometimes they are thrust vnder the dagger, then they say, they bare it a litle too high: sometimes a thrust being strongly made, they being soundly paid therewith, say, they were a litle too slow, & sometimes they be soundly paid with a thrust, & they thinke they were a litle too quick. So they that practise or thinke to be cunning in the dagger ward, are all the dayes of their liues learning, and are neuer taught. *The Dagger is an imperfect ward.*

That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage against the Sword and Target.

THe Sword & Target together hath but two fights; that is, the variable fight, & the close fight, for the close fight, the nũber of his feet are too many to take against any mã of skill hauing the Sword & buckler, & for the variable fight although not so many in number, yet too many to win the place with his foot to strike or thrust home. The sword & buckler-man can out of his variable, opẽ & gardãt fight, come brauely off & on, false and double, strike & thrust home, & make a true crosse vpon euery occasion at his pleasure: if the Sword & Target mã will flie to his gardãt fight, the bredth of his Target will not suffer it, if to his open fight, thẽ hath the Sword & Buckler man in effect the sword and Buckler to the single, for in that fight by reason of the bredth, the target can do litle good or none at all.

The short Staffe.

NOw for the vantage of the ſhort Staffe againſt the Sword and Buckler, Sword & Target, two hand ſword, ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poniard, there is no great queſtion to be made in anie of theſe weapons: whenſoeuer anie blow or thruſt ſhall be ſtrongly made with the ſtaffe, they are euer in falſe place, in the cariage of the wards, for if at any of theſe ſixe weapons he carie his ward high & ſtrõg for his head, as of neceſſitie he muſt carie it verie high, otherwiſe it will be too weake to defend a blow being ſtrongly made at the head, then will his ſpace be too wide, in due time to breake the thruſt from his bodie. Againe, if he carie his ward lower, thereby to be in equall ſpace for readineſſe to breake both blow & thruſt, then in that place his ward is too low, and too weake to defend the blow of the ſtaffe: for the blow being ſtrongly made at the head vpon that ward, will beate downe the ward and his head together, and put him in great danger of his life. And here is to be noted, that if he fight well, the ſtaffe-man neuer ſtriketh but at the head, and thruſteth preſently vnder at the body: and if a blow be firſt made, a thruſt followeth; & if a thruſt be firſt made, a blow followeth; and in doing of any of them, the one breedeth the other: ſo that howſoeuer anie of theſe ſixe weapons ſhall carie his ward ſtrongly to defend the firſt, he ſhall be too farre in ſpace to defend the ſecond, whether it be blow or thruſt. 26

Yet againe for the ſhort ſtaffe: the ſhort ſtaffe hath the vantage againſt the Battel-axe, blacke-bill, or Halbard,

bard: the ſhort ſtaffe hath the vantage, by reaſon of the nimbleneſſe and length: he will ſtrike and thruſt freely, and in better and ſwifter time then can the Battol-axe, Blacke-bill, or Halbard: and by reaſon of his iudgement, diſtance and time, fight ſafe; And this reſolue vpon, the ſhort ſtaffe is the beſt weapon againſt all maner of weapons, the Forreſt bill excepted.

The ſhort ſtaffe or halfe Pike hath the aduantage againſt two ſword and dagger men, or two Rapiers. Poiniards, and Gantlets.

Alſo the ſhort ſtaffe hath aduantage againſt two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards and Gantlets, the reaſons and cauſes before are for the moſt part ſet downe already, the which being well conſidered, you ſhall plainely ſee, that whenſoeuer anie one of the Sword & Dagger men, or Rapier and Poiniard men ſhall breake his diſtance, or ſuffer the Staffe-man to breake his, that man which did firſt breake his diſtãce, or ſuffer the diſtance to be won againſt him, is preſently in danger of death. And this cãnot in reaſon be denied, becauſe the diſtance appertaining to the Staffe-man, either to keepe or breake, ſtandeth vpon the mouing of one large ſpace alwayes at the moſt, both for his offence or ſafety. The other two in the breach of their diſtance to offend the Staffe-man, haue alwayes foure paces at the leaſt therin they fall too great in number with their feet, and too ſhort in diſtance to offend the Staffe-man. Now there reſteth no more to be ſpoken of, but how the Staffe-man ſhall behaue himſelf to keepe that diſtance, that one of the Sword & Dagger men get not behind him, while the other ſhal buſie him before: to do that is very eaſie, by reaſon of the ſmal nũber of his feet, for by a verie ſmall turning of his feet, as it were in the Center point of a wheele, the other two to keepe their diſtance, are driuen to runne twentie foote for one, as it

were vpon the vttermoſt part or circle of the wheele: all this while the Staffe-man is verie well. Then it commeth thus to paſſe, whether they both labour to get behind him, or one keepe directly before him whileſt the other get behind him, yet before that be brought to paſſe, they ſhal either be both before him or iuſt againſt both ſides of him: at which time ſoeuer the Staffe-man finding either of them within diſtance, he preſently in making of his play, ſlayeth with blow or thruſt one of thē, or at the leaſt putteth him in great danger of his life. If the Staffe-man take his time, when they are both before him, that is to ſay, before they come to the half ring, iuſt againſt both ſides of the Staffe-man, then he that is neareſt within diſtance is ſlain by blow or thruſt, or put in great danger of his life. But if the Sword and Dagger men do keepe their diſtance vntill they come to the iuſt halfe ring right againſt the ſides of the Staffe-man, and then breake diſtance, that man that firſt breaketh diſtance is ſlaine with blow or thruſt, or ſore hurt, and in great danger of death: and the Staffe-man in making that play at that inſtant, muſt turne with one large pace, the which he may eaſily do, before the other can get neare enough to offend him, by reaſon that he hath to make with his feet but one large pace, but the other hath at the leaſt three paces. But if the Sword and Dagger-men will in the time that they be before him, keep their diſtance in the time of their being vpon the middle part of the outſide of the circle, right againſt both ſides of him, & will labor with all heed & diligence to be both or one of the behind him, that troubleth the Staffe-man nothing at all, for in that very time, when he findeth them paſt the middle part of the circle, he pre-

ſently

ſently turneth, by the which he ſhall naturally ſet himſelfe as it were in a triangle, and both the ſword and dagger-men, ſhall thereby ſtand both before him in true diſtance of three paces, from offending of him at the leaſt, as at the firſt they did. And take this for a true ground, there is no man able to ward a ſound blow with the Sword and Dagger, nor Rapier, Poinyard, and Gantlet, being ſtrongly made at the head, with the Staffe, and run in withall, the force of both handes is ſuch, being in his full motion and courſe, that although the other do carie his ward high and ſtrong with both handes, yet his feete being mouing from the ground, the great force of the blow will ſtrike him with his ward, and all downe flat to ground. But if he ſtand faſt with his feete, he may with both weapons together, ſtrongly defend his head from the blow, but then you are ſufficiently inſtructed, the thruſt being preſently made, after the blow full at the bodie, it is impoſſible in due time to breake it, by reaſon of the largeneſſe of his ſpace.

The ſhort Staffe hath the vantage againſt the long ſtaffe, and Morris Pike, and the Forreſt bill againſt all maner of weapons.

THe reaſons are theſe: The ſhort Staffe 27
hath the vantage of the long Staffe and Morris Pike in his ſtrength & narrownes of ſpace in his foure wardes of defence. And the Forreſt bill hath the vantage of all maner of weapons in his ſtrength and narrownes of ſpace in his eight wardes of defence: and the rather becauſe the Bill hath two wardes for one againſt the Staffe

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or Morris Pike, that is to say, foure with the Staffe, and foure with the head, and is more offensiue then is the Staffe or Morris Pike: yet a questiō may be made by the vnskilfull, concerning the fight between the long Staffe and the short, in this sort: Why should not the long Staffe haue aduantage against short Staffe, sithe that the long Staffe-man, being at libertie with his handes, may make his long Staffe both long and short for his best aduantage, when he shall thinke it good, and therefore when he shall find himselfe ouermatched in the length of his Staffe, by the strength of the short Staffe, and narrownesse of space in his foure wardes of defence, he can presently by drawing backe of his Staffe in his handes, make his Staffe as short as the others, and so be readie to fight with him at his owne length. To this I answere, that when the long Staffe-man is driuen there to lye, the length of his Staffe that will lye behind him, will hinder him to strike, thrust, ward, or goe backe in due time. Neither can he turne the contrarie end of his Staffe to keepe out the short Staffe man from the Close, nor safely to defend himselfe at his comming in.

A question.

Answere.

Againe of the vantages of weapons.

28 TAke this for a general rule, all long Staues, Morris Pikes, Forrest bils, Iauelins, or such like long weapons, of what sort soeuer, being aboue the true lengthes, the shortest haue the aduantage; because they can crosse and vncrosse in shorter time then can the longer: and all maner of short weapons to be vsed with both handes, as staues, and such like, being vnder the perfect lengthes, the

the longeſt haue the aduantage, and all maner of weapons to be vſed with one hand, that are aboue the perfect length of the ſingle Sword, the ſhorteſt haue the vantage, and all maner of weapons vnder the iuſt length of the ſhort Sword, as Fauchions, Skaines, or Hangers, Woodkniues, Daggers, and ſuch like ſhort weapons of imperfect lengthes, the longeſt haue the aduantage, becauſe the fight of theſe weapons conſiſt within the halfe or quarter Sword, wherein by the ſwift motions of their handes, their eyes are deceiued, and in thoſe weapons, commonly for their handes lieth no defence. And if two ſhall fight with ſtaues or Swordes, or what weapons ſoeuer, the one of them hauing his weapon longer then the perfect length, and the other his weapon ſhorter then the perfect length, he that hath the longeſt hath the vantage, becauſe the ſhorteſt can make no true Croſſe in true time. The ſhort Staffe or halfe Pike, Forreſt bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length, to be vſed with both handes, haue the aduantage againſt two Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniardes, and Gantlets, and againſt all other weapons whatſoeuer, the Forreſt bill excepted.

Againe for the ſhort Staffe or halfe Pike.

THe ſhort Staffe is moſt commonly the beſt weapon of all other, although other weapons may be more offenſiue, and eſpecially againſt manie weapons together, by reaſon of his nimbleneſſe and ſwift motions, and is not much inferiour to the Forreſt bill, although the Forreſt bill be more offenſiue, and hath more wardes, becauſe 29

the Staffe is verie vncertaine, but the Bill is a more certaine marke, by reason of the breadth of the head, whereby as the Bill hath aduantage in his wardes in the head, so therefore hath the Staffe the like defence, or rather more, to play vpon the head of the Bill, not onely to make a perfect good ward, but thereby, the rather to cast the Bill out of the right line, whereby the Staffe-man may thrust safe, and endanger the Bill-man: and the rather because therein he is the first mouer, wherin there is great vantage, both in time and force. And if the Bilman be not very skilfull (all vantages and disaduantages of both sides considered,) the short Staffe will proue the better weapon. Lastly note this, that long Staues, Morris Pikes, and such like weapons of imperfect lengthes, being to be vsed with both hands, notwithstanding their imperfect lengthes, are perfect weapons to be vsed, the one against the other, and their fightes therein perfect, because in drawing of them backe betwixt their handes, their motions are swifter backewardes, then is the time of the Agents feet forwardes, by the which all their lost times are redeemed: therefore these weapons in their fightes, the one against the other are perfect. And these weapons in the night are the best weapons of all other, and haue great aduantage against the forrest Bill, short Staffe, or anie maner of short weapons whatsoeuer: for these causes, they boldly make home their fightes, and if neede be against desperate men, that will venture themselues to run in, they redeeme their lost times. But the other with shorter weapons for lacke of light, can make no true defence. Thus endeth the vantages of weapons.

Note this.

Questions

Questions and answers betweene the Scholler and the Maister, of the vantages and disaduantages betweene a tall man, and a man of meane stature, hauing both the perfect knowledge in their weapons.

Scholler.

WHo hath the aduantage in fight, of a tall man, or a man of meane stature?

Maister.

The tall man hath the vantage, for these causes: his reach being longer, and weapon vnto his stature accordingly, he hath thereby a shorter course with his feet to win the true place, wherein by the swift motion of his hand, he may strike or thrust home: in the which time a man of meane stature cannot reach him, & by his large pace, in his true pace in his regression further, setteth himself out of all danger, & these are the vantages that a tall man hath against anie man of shorter reach then himselfe.

Tall men haue the vantage against men of meane stature.

Scholler.

What vantage hath a man of meane stature against a tall man?

Maister.

He hath none: because the true times in fight, and actions accordingly, are to be obserued and done, as well by a tall man, as by a man of meane stature.

Scholler.

Why then if this be true, that tall men haue the vantage against me of meane stature, it should seeme in fight

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there is no perfection, other then this, when men of like ſtature, reach, & length of weapon, ſhall fight together, the which will ſeldome or neuer happen, but either in the length of their weapons, ſtatures or reaches (if their ſwords ſhould be of iuſt length) ſome difference moſt commonly there will be in their reaches.

Maiſter.

Yes verily, the tall man hath ſtill the vantage, and yet the fight is perfect, although the men that ſhall happen to fight, ſhall happē to be vnequall in their ſtatures, reaches, or lengths of their weapons.

Scholler.

That can I hardly beleeue, vnleſſe you can tell me by Art how to auoid or ſafely defend my ſelfe, being but a man of meane ſtature, againſt a tall man.

Maiſter.

I will tell you: there belongeth vnto this Art of defence onely to be vſed with the feet, progreſſion, regreſſion, trauerſing, and treading of grounds: in any of theſe you playing the part of the Patient, or Patient Agent, your feete are ſwifter in their motions then are the Agents, becauſe his weight and number of his feet in his comming to win the true place to ſtrike or thruſt home, are greater then yours, and therefore the true time is yours to auoid him, or ſafely to defend your ſelfe: ſo the Art is ſtill true, and the tall man hath ſtill the vantage.

Scholler.

Yet I am not fully ſatisfied herein, becauſe you tell me ſtill that the tall man hath the vantage, and notwithſtanding you ſay the Art is true, wherein then hath the tall man the vantage, when by your Art you can defend your ſelfe againſt him.

Maiſter.

Maister.

I will satisfie you therein thus. The tall man hath the vantage, he can maintaine his fight, both by nature and Art, with more ease then can the man of meane stature, because the man of meane stature hath thereby a further course with his feete to passe to the place, wherein he may strike or thrust home, and in winning of that place, is driuen by Art to come garded vnder his wards to defend himselfe, because in the time of his comming, the tall man may both naturally or artificially strike or thrust home, in the which time, if the mã of meane stature should faile in the least iote of his Art, he should be in great daunger of death or hurt. But the tall man can naturally and safely come to the true place open, without any artificiall wards at all, and therein also endanger the other, or driue him still to trauerse his ground, with all the artificiall skill that he hath to defend himselfe; and all this the tall man doth by reason of his length of weapon, large pace, short course, and long reach, with great safetie, pleasure and ease. And for those causes the tall man hath still the vantage of men of meane stature, and yet notwitstãding the noble Science of Defence most perfect and good.

Foure inuincible aduantages consist in a tall man against a man of meane stature.
Long reach.
Short course.
Length of weapõ.
Large pace.

Of the long single Rapier fight betweene valiant men, hauing both skill, he that is the best wrastler, or if neither of them can wraſtle, the ſtrongeſt man moſt commonly killeth the other, or leaueth him at his mercie.

WHen two valiant men of skill at single Rapier do fight, one or both of them most cõmonly standing vpon their strength or skill in wrastling, will presently seeke to run into 31

the close; but hauing both skill, not without speciall care of their gard or crosse, the which they may safely do, by reason of the length of their Rapiers: but happning both of one mind, the rather do bring themselues together: that being done, no skill with Rapiers auaileth, they presently grapple fast their hilts, wrists, armes, bodies or neckes, as in lustring, wrastling, or striuing together, they may best find for their aduantages: wherby it most commonly falleth out, that he that is the best wrastler, or strongest man (if neither of them can wrastle) ouercommeth, wresting by strength, or fine skill in wrastling, the Rapier from his aduersarie, or casting him frō him, either to the ground, or to such distance, that he may by reason therof, vse the edge or point of his rapier, to strike or thrust him, leauing him dead or aliue at his mercie. But if but one of these valiant men shall seeke to run into the close, and that the other shall vse his skill in trauersing of his ground, or otherwise by standing vpon his gard or *Stocata* ward, to take all maner of aduantages at his cōming, yet all auaileth him not, because the Rapiers being long, the crossing of the blades cannot be auoided: that being made, the oppressor runneth faster forwards then can the defendant backwards, and so are brought together, as in the first assault they were, & euerie action therein accordingly performed.

Of the Rapier and Poiniard-fight betwixt valiant men, hauing both skill.

32 IF two valiant men do fight at Rapier and Poiniard hauing both skill, one or both of them will presently presse hard to winne the place, wherein in his iudgement he may thrust home. If both

be

be of one mind, the time is doubled in winning the ſame: whereby it commeth to paſſe, that then he that firſt thruſteth, endangereth, killeth or hurteth the other: and if they both thruſt together, as they may do by the equall time of their feet, then they are moſt commonly both ſlaine, or both hurt. And this is well knowne vnto all men of skill, that the place being once gotten, there is neither iudgement, ſpace, pace, nor time, either by wards with their Rapier blades, or by breaking with their Poiniards, or flying backe, that can preſerue or defend them. But if but one of them will ſeeke to win by paſſage, hard preſſing, or otherwiſe the place, wherin in his iudgement he may thruſt home, it is impoſſible for the other to denie him the ſame, becauſe the length of the Rapiers winneth him the croſſe; the croſſe being taken, the place is had; the place being had, he that firſt thruſteth, firſt ſpeedeth: if both thruſt together, they are both in danger: thē preſently followeth (vnleſſe it pleaſe God otherwiſe to haue it) the ſtabs with their daggers, wherein there lieth no defence.

Of the long Rapier & Poiniard-fight betweene two valiant men, the one hauing skil, the other none: that he that hath no skill hath the vantage.

WHen two valiant men ſhal fight with lōg Rapiers and Poiniards, the one hauing skill, and the other none, he that hath no skill moſt commōly proueth himſelf the better mā, for theſe cauſes or reaſons following. Firſt the skilfull man as knowing the other to haue no skill, or finding it to be ſo by his ſhape or 33

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maner of comming towardes him, will presently yeeld to take the aduantage of his comming, or else with all speed put himselfe into his short ward, to be readie at his comming to make out a strong *Stocata* (as the *Italians* call it) the other knowing his imperfection in fight, assureth himselfe there can be no great good for him to stand long out at the point, presently redoubleth or reuiueth his spirits with perfect resolution, to make short worke, couragiously with some offensiue action, such as nature shall best yeeld vnto him, flieth in with all force and agilitie, the skilfull man standeth watching to take such aduantages as his schoolemaister hath taught him, in the which time, manie times it falleth out, he is taught a new time, euen by an vnskilfull man that neuer fought before, is sore hurt or slaine: and if it happen they both misse in their offensiue actions, then by reason thereof, and of the imperfect length of their Rapiers, they come to stabbing with their Poiniards, wherin there lyeth no defence, because distance being broken, iudgement faileth, time is lost, and their eies (by the swift motions of their handes) are deceiued.

Of the long single Rapier, or Rapier and Poiniard-fight betweene two vnskilfull men being valiant.

34 WHen two vnskilfull men (being valiant) shall fight with long single Rapiers, there is lesse danger in that kind of fight, by reason of their distance in conuenient length, waight, and vnweildinesse, then is with short Rapiers, whereby it commeth to passe, that what hurt shall happen to be done, if anie with the edge or point of their Rapiers

Rapiers is done in a moment, and presently will grapple and wraſtle together, wherin moſt commonly the ſtrongeſt or beſt Wraſtler ouercommeth, and the like fight falleth out betweene them, at the long Rapier and Poiniard, but much more deadly, becauſe in ſtead of Cloſe and Wraſtling, they fall moſt commonly to ſtabbing with their Poiniardes.

Of the imperfection and inſufficiencie of Rapiers in generall, of what length ſoeuer they be.

35

IF two fight with long Rapiers, vpon euerie Croſſe made within the halfe Rapier, if they haue Poiniardes, they moſt commonly ſtabbe each other, which cannot be auoided, becauſe the Rapiers being long, the Croſſe cannot be vndone of either ſide, without going backe with their feete, the which likewiſe in due time cannot be done, becauſe the hand is more ſwifter then the feete, and the feete more ſwifter in their courſe forwardes then backwardes, neither can the Croſſe be preuented, becauſe the point of neceſſitie lyeth too farre off in his offence, or elſe within compaſſe of the true time of the hand and bodie, by reaſon of his imperfect length, and ſo by the like reaſons, if two fight with long ſingle Rapiers, vpon euerie Croſſe made therewith, within the halfe Rapier, the Cloſe cannot be auoided, wherby it commeth to paſſe, moſt commonly, that the ſtrongeſt man or beſt Wraſtler, ouercommeth. Now if two do fight with ſhort Rapiers, or Rapiers of conuenient length, ſuch Rapiers be inconuenient and inſufficient alſo for lacke of an hilt to defend the hand and head from the blow; for no eie (in making a

If they ſtand vpon breaking with their Daggers, he that firſt winneth the place, and thruſteth home, hurteth the other for lacke of the circumference: if both thruſt together, they are both ſped, becauſe their Spaces of Defence are too wide to anſwere the time of the hand, and by the ſwift motion thereof, the eye in that diſtance is by the ſame deceiued.

The feete in their courſe, but not in the firſt motion, alwaies note for the auoiding of great errours.

perfect ward for the head, to defend a blow, can discerne to take the same within three or foure inches, wherby it may as well and as often fall vpon the hand, as vpon the blade of the Rapier. Againe, the hilt as well serueth to defend the head as the hand, and is a more sure and strong ward, then is the blade of the Rapier. And further, vnderstand this for truth, that in gardant and open fight, the hand without an hilt lieth open to most blowes that shalbe stroken by the Agent, out of the gardant or open fight, because in the true cariage of the gardant fight, the hand must lie aboue the head, in such straightnes and narrownes of space, that which way soeuer the Agent shall strike or thrust at the head, face, or bodie, the remouing of two or foure inches shall saue all. And now some what more for the shortnesse or conuenient length of Rapiers.

Rapiers hauing no hilts to defend the head, the Rapier-man is driuen of necessitie to lie at the variable fight or low ward, and being there he can neither defend in due time, head, face, nor bodie from the blowes or thrustes of him, that shall fight out of the gardant or open fight, but is continually in great danger of the Agent, for these causes following. First, because his space is too wide to defend his head from blow or thrust. Secondly his Pace standing vpon that fight, wilbe of necessitie too great or too narrow: if too narrow, too weak: if too large, his weight and number of his feet, are too great to endanger him, that is vpon his gardant or open fight.

Of

Of the imperfection and insufficiencie of the fight of the single Rapier, Rapier and Poiniard, Rapier and Buckler, Rapier and Cloke, and Rapier and Gloue of maile.

THe Rapier fight, whether it be single or accõpanied with Poiniard, Buckler, cloke, or gloue of male, is still by reason of the insufficiencie or imperfection of the Rapier, an imperfect fight: vnperfect instruments can make no perfect musicke, neither can vnperfect weapons make perfect fight: let the men that handle them haue all the knowledge that may be in all maner of weapons, yea the full height, or perfection, and true habite by his great labour and industry, euen as it were naturally effected in him, yet if the weapons that they shall fight withall be imperfect or insufficient to performe whatsoeuer appertaineth vnto true fight, as concerning the perfection of their safetie, it auaileth them nothing. What shall we then say for the Rapier? Is the Rapier an imperfect or insufficient weapon to perfourme whatsoeuer appertaineth vnto the true fight? Yea: Wherefore? Because vnto the true fight there appertaineth foure fights, Gardant fight, Open fight, Variable fight, and Close fight: without all foure of these fights it is impossible to fight safe: but the Rapier for lacke of an hilt is an vnperfect weapon, and therefore insufficient to fight safe vpon these foure fights, the reasons are alreadie set downe in the Paradoxe before, but it is inferred to loose the benefit of two of the 36

beſt fights, gardant and open fight, and to flie from thē, and truſt only vnto variable fight, and cloſe fight. Now hauing proued through the imperfection or inſufficiencie of the Rapier, the imperfection of the Rapier fight, it remaineth that I ſpeake of the reſt of the weapons, or inſtruments appertaining vnto Rapier fight.

The Rapier and Poiniard fight, the Rapier & Buckler fight, the Rapier and cloke fight, & the Rapier & gloue of male fight: all theſe fights by reaſon of the imperfection of the Rapier, and Rapier fight, are all alſo imperfect fights: and for proofe of the vncertaintie and impoſſibilities of ſafetie in any of theſe fights, thus it ſtandeth. Theſe fights depend altogether vpō variable fight and cloſe fight: in anie of theſe fights it is impoſſible in true ſpace of Offence to keepe the blades of their Rapiers from croſſing, or frō breaking with the Poiniards, buckler, cloke, or breaking or catching with the gloue of male; becauſe in anie of theſe two fights, the Agent hath ſtill in true ſpace the blade of the Patients Rapier to worke vpon. Theſe things by letters cannot be made more plaine, neither is it vnknowne to the skilfull, or in fight by anie meanes to be auoided, the weapon being too farre in true ſpace to be wrought vpon, the place cannot be denied, do the patient Agent what he can for his life to the contrarie, either by blowes, thruſts, falſing, or doubling of thruſts, going backe, indirections, or turnings of the body, or what elſe ſoeuer may in the higheſt touch of wit or ſtrength, or agilitie of bodie be deuiſed or done, to keepe out the Agent: but ſtill the Agent by narrowneſſe of ſpace bringeth himſelf by ſtrōg gard to the place, where being brought, it is as impoſſible to fight ſafe, as it is for two deſperate men ſet together

ther being both blind; becauſe in the the true place (won in Rapier or variable fight) their eyes by the ſwift motions of their hands are deceiued, the croſſes in that fight are falſe, their diſtance, iudgements and times are loſt, either to offend in ſafetie, or ſafely to defend themſelues: and theſe reaſons, rules, or grounds of the feates of armes are infallible and inuincible.

Now, ô you Italian teachers of Defence, where are your *Stocatas, Imbrocatas, Mandritas, Puntas*, & *Puynta reuerſas, Stramiſons, Paſſatas, Carricados, Amazzas*, & *Incartatas*, & playing with your bodies, remouing with your feet a litle aſide, circle wiſe winding of your bodies, making of three times with your feet together, marking with one eye the motion of the aduerſary, & with the other eye the aduãtage of thruſting? What is become of all theſe iugling gambalds, Apiſh deuiſes, with all the reſt of your ſquint-eyed trickes? when as through your deepe ſtudies, long practiſes, & apt bodies, both ſtrong & agilious, you haue attained to the height of all theſe things. What then auaileth it you, when you ſhal come to fight for your liues with a man of skill, you ſhall haue neither time, nor place, in due time to performe any one of them. Nor gardant nor open fight ſafely to keep out a man of skill, a man of no skill, or ſcholler of your owne teaching, from the true place, the place of ſafetie, the place of vncertaintie or miſchiefe, the place of wounds or death, but are there inforced to ſtand in that miſchieuous, vncertaine, dangerous, and moſt deadly place, as two men hauing loſt in part their chiefeſt ſences, moſt furiouſly with their rapiers or poiniards, wounding or ſlaying each other.

Thus endeth the imperfect fights of the rapier with

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all maner of weapons or instruments thereto appertaining, with their imperfections, through the true groũds and rules of the Art of armes, truly displayed & brought to light.

All laud be vnto the Almighty God.

That the reasons vsed by the Italian Fencers in commending the vse of the Rapier and Poiniard, because it maketh peace, maketh against themselues.

37 IT hath bin commonly held, that since the Italians haue taught the Rapier fight, by reason of the dangerous vse therof, it hath bred great ciuilitie amongst our English nation, they will not now giue the lye, nor with such foule speeches abuse themselues, therefore there are fewer frayes in these times then were wont to be: it cannot be denied but this is true, that we are more circumspect of our words, and more fearefull to fight, then heretofore we haue bene. But whereof commeth it? Is it from this, that the Rapier maketh peace in our minds; or from hence, that it is not so sufficient defence for our bodies in our fight? He that will fight when he is armed, will not fight when he is naked: is it therefore good to go naked to keepe peace? he that would fight with his Sword and Buckler, or Sword and Dagger, being weapons of true defence, will not fight with his Rapier and Poiniard, wherein no true defence or fight is perfect: are these insufficiẽt weapõs therfore the better, because not being sufficiẽt to defẽd vs in fight, they force vs vnto peace? What else is it, but to say, it is good for

There are few frayes, but more valiant Gentlemẽ slain: now then were then.

subiects

subiects to be poore, that they may not go to law: or to lacke munition, that they may not fight, nor go to the warres: and to conclude, what more followeth through the imperfect workes of these *Italian* peacemakers? They haue made many a strong man in his fight weake, many a valiant man fearefull, manie a worthie man trusting to their imperfect fight, hath bene slaine, and manie of our desperate boyes and young youthes, to become in that Rapier-fight, as good men as *England* yeeldeth, and the tallest men in this land, in that fight as verie boyes as they and no better. This good haue the *Italian* teachers of Offence done vs, they haue transformed our boyes into men, and our men into boyes, our strong men into weakenesse, our valiant men doubtfull, and manie worthie men resoluing themselues vpon their false resolutions, haue most wilfully in the field, with their Rapiers ended their liues. And lastly, haue left to remaine amongst vs after their deathes, these inconueniences behind them, false Fence-bookes, imperfect weapons, false fightes, and euill customes, whereby for lacke of vse and practise in perfect weapons and true fight, we are disabled for the seruice of our Prince, defence of our countrey, and safetie of our liues in priuate fight.

That the short Sword hath the aduantage against the long Sword or long Rapier.

WHereas for the most part opinions are 38
generally holden, that the long Sword, or long Rapier, hath the vantage in fight against the short Sword, which the *Italian* teachers of Defence, by their false de-

monſtratiõs haue brought vs to beleeue. I haue thought good that the truth may appeare which hath the vantage, to adde my helpe vnto the reaſons they vſe in their owne behalfe, for that yet I could neuer heare them make a ſound reaſon for the ſame. Theſe are the reaſons.

Theſe reaſons are vſed by the Italians.

Firſt with my long Rapier, I will put my ſelfe into my gard or *Stocata*, holding my hilt backe by the outſide of my right thigh, keeping in ſhort the point of my Rapier, ſo as he that hath the ſhort Sword, ſhall not be able to reach the point of my Rapier, to make his ward or Croſſe with his Dagger, Buckler, Sword, or Cloke, without ſtepping in of his foote, the which time is too long to anſwere the time of the hand, by reaſon of my diſtance. I can there ſtand ſafe without danger of blow or thruſt, playing the Patients part: if you ſtrike or thruſt you do it too ſhort, by reaſon of my diſtance: if you ſeek to come nearer, you muſt do it with the time of your foote, in the which time I may ſafely thruſt home: if in that diſtance you breake it not, you are ſlaine: if you do breake it, yet you do me no harme, by reaſon of my diſtance, and I may ſtand faſt and thruſt againe; or flie backe at my pleaſure: ſo haue you put your ſelfe in danger of your life, and hauing hardly eſcaped, are driuen againe to begin a new bought, as at the firſt you did. Againe, if I pleaſe, I can be the oppreſſour, keeping the ſame gard, and my point in ſhort as I did before, and preſſing ſtrongly by putting in by litle and litle of my feete, vntill the place with my foote be gotten, wherein (in my iudgement) I may thruſt home, the which I may boldly and ſafely do, without reſpect of anie ward at all, by reaſon of my diſtance, in which time of my comming he muſt ſtrike, thruſt, ward, or go backe: if he go backe,

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it is a great disgrace: if he strike or thrust, it is too short: if he stand to defend, the place being alreadie gotten, where I may thrust home, the thrust being verie quicke & strongly made, such is the force and swiftnesse thereof, that it is impossible by nature or art, for anie man to breake one thrust of an hundred. These reasons in my opinion may suffice to confirme the wise, that there is no question to be made, but that the long Rapier hath the aduantage against the short Sword.

A confutation of the Italians reason.

Sir you haue pretily handled your discourse, concerning the vantages of the long Rapier against the short Sword, especially at the first shew, and according to common sence, but for the substance and truth of the true fight, you haue said nothing, because for the performance of anie of your allegations, you haue neither true Pace, Place, Time, nor Space: these are the reasons. Your Pace of necessitie must be too large, because otherwise you cannot keepe safe the point of your long Rapier, from the Crosse of the short Sword, vnlesse you will with a narrow Pace keepe backe your hilt so farre, that the space of your offence wilbe too large or too long in distance, and your bodie vnapt to moue and to thrust both strong and quicke in due time, nor aptly to keepe your distance, to win the place with your feete, to thrust home. So now you may plainely see, if you haue skill in the art or science of Defence, that to performe anie thing which you haue alleadged, you haue neither true Pace, Place, time nor Space. But if you will stand vpon the largenesse of your Pace, to keepe backe or saue the point of your long Rapier from the ward or Crosse of the short Sword, or vpon your *Passatos*, in all these you haue great disaduantages: and

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theſe are my reaſons: Your number will be too great, as thus: whenſoeuer you meane out of your large pace to thruſt home, you muſt of neceſſitie make foure times with your feet, and one with your hand, or two times with your feet, and one with your hand at the leaſt: and whenſoeuer you make any of your paſſages, the nũber of your feet are greater then the greateſt of any of theſe times done out of the large pace: but the patient with his ſhort ſword, to auoyd you, or diſappoint you of your thruſt, hath but one time with his foot, at or before the which time, as he in his iudgemẽt ſhall find you in your motion, hath by the ſlow and great number of your motions or times, ſufficient time ſafely out of all danger to make himſelfe readie to take his croſſe with his ſhort ſword. Now Sir, whether you thruſt or not thruſt, whether you play the part of an Agent, or Patient, it helpeth you nothing, for he that hath the ſhort ſword hath foure times or motions againſt the long Rapier, namely, bent, ſpent, lying ſpent, and drawing backe, in all maner of fights theſe are to be obſerued both by the Patient and Agent. Now note, he that hath the long Rapier muſt of neceſſitie play vpon one of theſe foure motions, or be Patient, which ſoeuer he ſhall do, he is ſtill in great danger of the croſſe of the ſhort ſword, becauſe if he be Agent, his number is too great, he falleth into one of the foure motions, the Patient with his ſhort ſword, hauing but the time of the hand, or hãd & foot, ſafely vpon theſe actions or times taketh his croſſe with the ſhort Sword: that being done, he preſently vncroſſeth and ſtriketh or thruſteth at his pleaſure him that hath the long Rapier, in the head, face, or bodie. Now here is againe to be noted, that when the croſſe

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is made, if he that hath the long Rapier ſtand faſt, he is wounded preſently in the vncroſſing of the ſhort ſword, if he ſtep or leape backe to ſaue himſelfe, yet the time of the hand being ſwifter then the time of the foot, ouertaketh him, with blow or thruſt in the arme, hand, head, face and bodie. Now if he that hath the long Rapier will be patient & make no play, but lie ſtill watching to make his thruſt or *Stocata* iuſt in the comming or mouing of the Agents feete with his ſhort ſword, then he hath as great diſaduantage as he had when he was Patient, becauſe thē the Agent with his ſhort Sword hath but hand and foot to make his croſſe: which is moſt ſafely to be done in that time, which we call Bent, and is as impoſſible for the Rapier-man to preuent, as it is for an vnskilfull to ſtrike or thruſt iuſt together with a man of skill. Then thus I conclude, that he that fighteth with a long Rapier, againſt him that fighteth with a ſhort Sword, can do nothing in due time to defend himſelfe, or hurt the other, but is ſtill in daunger of his life, or at the mercie of him that hath the ſhort Sword, or elſe hath no ſafe way to helpe himſelfe, but onely *Cobs* Trauerſe. *Cobs Trauerſe.* This *Cob* was a great quareller, and did delight in great brauerie to giue foule words to his betters, and would not refuſe to go into the field to fight with any man, and when he came into the field, would draw his Sword to fight, for he was ſure by the cunning of his Trauerſe, not to be hurt by anie man: for at anie time finding himſelfe ouermatched would ſuddenly turne his backe and runne away with ſuch ſwiftneſſe, that it was thought a good horſe would ſcarce take him. And this when I was a young man, was verie much ſpoken of by many Gentlemen of the Innes of

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the Court, and was called *Cobs* Trauerſe and thoſe that had ſeene anie go backe too faſt in his fight, would ſay, he did tread *Cobs* Trauerſe.

George Siluer his militarie riddle, truly ſet downe betweene the Perfection and Imperfection of fight: containing the handling of the foure fights: wherein true conſiſteth the whole ſumme and full perfection of the true fight, with all maner of weapons, with an inuincible concluſion.

GArdant fight ſtayeth, putteth backe, or beateth gardant fight.

Open fight ſtayeth, putteth backe, or beateth open fight.

Variable fight anſwereth variable fight in the firſt diſtance, and not otherwiſe, except it be with the perfect length againſt the imperfect.

Cloſe fight is beaten by gardant fight.

Variable cloſe & gardant fight, beateth gardant fight, open fight, variable fight, and cloſe fight.

Gardant fight in the imperfection of the Agent or Patient, winneth the halfe ſword, and preuenteth the cloſe, and whoſoeuer firſt ventureth the cloſe, looſeth it, and is in great danger of death, and not poſſible to eſcape or get out againe without great hurt.

There attendeth moſt diligently vpon theſe foure fights foure offenſiue actions, which we call certaine, vncertaine, firſt, before, iuſt, and afterwards: they are to be performed through iudgement, time, meaſure, number and waight, by which all maner of blowes,

thrusts, falses, doubles, or slips, are preuented, or most safely defended. And thus endeth my riddle.

Now followeth the conclusion, that whosoeuer shall thinke or find himselfe in his fight too weake for the Agent, or Patient Agent, and therefore, or by reason of his drunkennesse, or vnreasonable desperateneſse shall prese within the halfe Sword, or deserately runne in of purpose to giue hurt, or at least for taking of one hurt, to giue another, shall most assuredly be in great daunger of death or wounds, and the other shall still be safe and go free.

Veritas vincit.

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A BRIEFE NOTE OF THREE ITA-lian Teachers of Offence.

I write not this to disgrace the dead, but to shew their impudēt boldnesse and insufficiency in performance of their profession when they were living: that from henceforth this briefe note may be a remembrance and warning to beware of had I wist.

THere were three Italian Teachers of Offence in my time. The first was *Signior Rocko*: the se cond was *Ieronimo*, that was *Signior Rocko* his boy, that taught Gentlemen in the *Blacke-Fryers*, as Vsher for his maister in steed of a man. The third was *Vincentio*. This *Signior Rocko* came into *England* about some thirtie yeares past: he taught the Noblemen & Gentlemen of the Court; he caused some of them to weare leaden soales in their shoes, the better to bring them to nimblenesse of feet in their fight. He disbursed a great summe of mony for the lease of a faire house in *VVarwicke* lane, which he called his Colledge, for he thought it great disgrace for him to keepe a Fence-schoole, he being then thought to be the onely famous Maister of the Art of armes in the whole world. He caused to be fairely drawne and set round about his Schoole all the Noblemens and Gentlemens armes that were his Schollers, and hanging right vnder their armes their Rapiers, daggers, gloues of male and gantlets. Also, he had benches and stooles, the roome being verie large, for Gentlemē to sit round about his Schoole to behold his teaching. He taught none commonly vnder twentie, fortie, fifty, or an hundred pounds. And because all things should be verie necessary for the Noblemē & gentlemē, he had

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in his schoole a large square table, with a greene carpet, done round with a verie brode rich fringe of gold, alwaies standing vpon it a verie faire Standish couered with Crimson Veluet, with inke, pens, pin-dust, and sealing waxe, and quiers of verie excellent fine paper gilded, readie for the Noblemen & Gentlemen (vpon occasion) to write their letters, being then desirous to follow their fight, to send their men to dispatch their businesse. And to know how the time passed, he had in one corner of his schoole a Clocke, with a verie faire large Diall, he had within that schoole, a roome the which was called his priuie schoole, with manie weapons therein, where he did teach his schollers his secret fight, after he had perfectly taught them their rules. He was verie much beloued in the Court.

There was one *Austen Bagger*, a verie tall gentleman of his handes, not standing much vpon his skill, but carying the valiant hart of an Englishman, vpon a time being merrie amongst his friendes, said he would go fight with *Signior Rocco*, presently went to *Signior Rocco* his house in the *Blackefriers*, and called to him in this maner: *Signior Rocco*, thou that art thought to be the onely cunning man in the world with thy weapon, thou that takest vpon thee to hit anie Englishman with a thrust vpon anie button, thou that takest vpon thee to come ouer the seas, to teach the valiant Noblemen and Gentlemen of *England* to fight, thou cowardly fellow come out of thy house if thou dare for thy life, I am come to fight with thee. *Signior Rocco* looking out at a window, perceiuing him in the street to stand readie with his Sword and Buckler, with his two hand Sword drawne, with all speed ran into the street, and manfully

let flie at *Auſten Bagger*, who moſt brauely defended himſelfe, and preſently cloſed with him, and ſtroke vp his heeles, and cut him ouer the breech, and trode vpon him, and moſt grieuouſly hurt him vnder his feet: yet in the end *Auſten* of his good nature gaue him his life, and there left him. This was the firſt and laſt fight that euer *Signior Rocco* made, ſauing once at Queene Hith he drew his Rapier vpon a waterman, where he was throughly beaten with Oares and Stretchers, but the oddes of their weapons were as great againſt his Rapier, as was his two hand Sword againſt *Auſten Baggers* Sword and Buckler, therefore for that fray he was to be excuſed.

Then came in *Vincentio* and *Ieronimo*, they taught Rapier-fight at the Court, at *London*, and in the countrey, by the ſpace of ſeauen or eight yeares or thereabouts. Theſe two *Italian* Fencers, eſpecially *Vincentio*, ſaid that Engliſhmen were ſtrong men, but had no cunning, and they would go backe too much in their fight, which was great diſgrace vnto them. Vpon theſe words of diſgrace againſt Engliſhmen, my brother *Toby Silver* and my ſelfe, made challenge againſt them both, to play with them at the ſingle Rapier, Rapier and Dagger, the ſingle Dagger, the ſingle Sword, the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, & two hand Sword, the Staffe, battell Axe, and Morris Pike, to be played at the Bell Sauage vpon the Scaffold, where he that went in his fight faſter backe then he ought, of Engliſhman or Italian, ſhold be in danger to breake his necke off the Scaffold. We cauſed to that effect, fiue or ſixe ſcore Bils of challenge to be printed, and ſet vp from *Southwarke* to the Tower, and from thence through *London* vnto *Weſtminſter*,

minſter, we were at the place with all theſe weapons at the time apointed, within a bow ſhot of their Fence ſchoole: many gentlemen of good accompt, caried manie of the bils of chalenge vnto them, telling them that now the *Siluers* were at the place appointed, with all their weapons, looking for them, and a multitude of people there to behold the fight, ſaying vnto them, now come and go with vs (you ſhall take no wrong) or elſe you are ſhamed for euer. Do the gentlemen what they could, theſe gallants would not come to the place of triall. I verily thinke their cowardly feare to anſwere this chalenge, had vtterly ſhamed them indeed, had not the maiſters of Defence of *London*, within two or three daies after, bene drinking of bottell Ale hard by *Vincentios* ſchoole, in a Hall where the *Italians* muſt of neceſſitie paſſe through to go to their ſchoole: and as they were comming by, the maiſters of Defence did pray them to drinke with them, but the *Italians* being verie cowardly, were afraide, and preſently drew their Rapiers: there was a pretie wench ſtanding by, that loued the *Italians*, ſhe ran with outcrie into the ſtreet, helpe, helpe, the *Italians* are like to be ſlaine: the people with all ſpeede came running into the houſe, and with their Cappes and ſuch things as they could get, parted the fraie, for the Engliſh maiſters of Defence, meant nothing leſſe then to foile their handes vpon theſe two faint-harted fellowes. The next morning after, all the Court was filled, that the *Italian* teachers of Fence had beaten all the maiſters of Defence in *London*, who ſet vpon them in a houſe together. This wan the *Italian* Fencers their credit againe, and thereby got much, ſtill continuing their falſe teaching to the end of their liues.

This *Vincentio* proued himselfe a stout man not long before he died, that it might be seene in his life time he had bene a gallant, and therefore no maruaile he tooke vpon him so highly to teach Englishmen to fight, and to set forth bookes of the feates of Armes. Vpon a time at *Wels* in Somersetshire, as he was in great brauerie amongst manie gentlemen of good accompt, with great boldnesse he gaue out speeches, that he had bene thus manie yeares in *England*, and since the time of his first comming, there was not yet one Englishman, that could once touch him at the single Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger. A valiant gentleman being there amongst the rest, his English hart did rise to heare this proude boaster, secretly sent a messenger to one *Bartholomew Brambie* a friend of his, a verie tall man both of his hands and person, who kept a schoole of Defence in the towne, the messenger by the way made the maister of Defence acquainted with the mind of the gentleman that sent for him, and of all what *Vincentio* had said, this maister of Defence presently came, and amongst all the gentlemen with his cap off, prayed maister *Vincentio*, that he would be pleased to take a quart of wine of him. *Vincentio* verie scornefully looking vpon him, said vnto him. Wherefore should you giue me a quart of wine? Marie Sir, said he, because I heare you are a famous man at your weapon. Then presently said the gentleman that sent for the maister of Defence: Maister *Vincentio*, I pray you bid him welcome, he is a man of your profession. My profession said *Vincentio*? what is my profession. Then said the gentleman, he is a maister of the noble science of Defence. Why said maister *Vincētio*, God make him a good man. But the maister of Defence wold

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not thus leaue him, but prayed him againe he would be pleased to take a quart of wine of him. The said *Vincētio*, I haue no need of thy wine. Then said the maister of Defence: Sir I haue a schoole of Defence in the towne, will it please you to go thither. Thy schoole, said maister *Vincentio*? what shall I do at thy schoole? play with me (said the maister) at the Rapier and Dagger, if it please you. Play with thee said maister *Vincentio*? if I play with thee, I will hit thee 1. 2. 3. 4. thrustes in the eie together. Then said the maister of Defence, if you can do so, it is the better for you, and the worse for me, but surely I can hardly beleeue that you can hit me: but yet once againe I hartily pray you good Sir, that you will go to my schoole, and play with me. Play with thee said maister *Vincentio* (verie scornefully?) by God me scorne to play with thee. With that word scorne, the maister of Defence was verie much moued, and vp with his great English fist, and stroke maister *Vincentio* such a boxe on the eare that he fell ouer and ouer, his legges iust against a Butterie hatch, whereon stood a great blacke Iacke: the maister of Defence fearing the worst, against *Vincentio* his rising, catcht the blacke Iacke into his hand, being more then halfe full of Beere. *Vincentio* lustily start vp, laying his hand vpon his Dagger, & with the other hand pointed with his finger, saying, very well: I will cause to lie in the Gaile for this geare, 1. 2. 3 4. yeares. And well said the maister of Defence, since you will drinke no wine, will you pledge me in Beere? I drinke to all the cowardly knaues in *England*, and I thinke thee to be the verieſt coward of them all: with that he cast all the Beere vpon him: notwithstanding *Vincentio* hauing nothing but his guilt Rapier, and

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Dagger about him, and the other for his defence the blacke lacke, would not at that time fight it out: but the next day met with the maister of Defence in the streete, and said vnto him, you remember how misused a me yesterday, you were to blame, me be an excellent man, me teach you how to thrust two foote further then anie Englishman, but first come you with me: then he brought him to a Mercers shop, and said to the Mercer, let me see of your best silken Pointes, the Mercer did presently shew him some of seauen groates a dozen; then he payeth fourteene groates for two dozen, and said to the maister of Defence, there is one dozen for you, and here is another for me. This was one of the valianteſt Fencers that came from beyond the seas, to teach Englishmen to fight, and this was one of the manliest frayes, that I haue hard of, that euer he made in *England*, wherin he shewed himselfe a farre better man in his life, then in his profession he was, for he professed armes, but in his life a better Christian. He set forth in print a booke for the vse of the Rapier and Dagger, the which he called his practise, I haue read it ouer, and because I finde therein neither true rule for the perfect teaching of true fight, nor true ground of true fight, neither sence or reason for due proofe thereof. I haue thought it friuolous to recite any part therin contained: yet that the truth hereof may appeare, let two mē being wel experienced in the Rapier and Dagger fight, choose any of the best branches in the same booke, & make trial with force and agility, without the which the truth betweene the true & false fight cannot be knowne, & they shall find great imperfections therein. And againe, for proofe that there is no truth, neither in his rules, groūds

or Rapier-fight, let triall be made in this maner: Set two vnskilfull men together at the Rapier and Dagger, being valiant, and you shall see, that once in two boutes there shall either one or both of them be hurt. Then set two skilfull men together, being valiant at the Rapier and Dagger, and they shall do the like. Then set a skilful Rapier and Dagger-man the best that can be had, and a valiant man hauing no skill together at Rapier & Dagger, and once in two bouts vpon my credit in all the experience I haue in fight, the vnskilful man, do the other what he can for his life to the contrarie, shall hurt him, and most commonly if it were in continuance of fight, you shall see the vnskilfull man to haue the aduantage. And if I should chuse a valiant man for seruice of the Prince, or to take part with me or anie friend of mine in a good quarrell, I would chuse the vnskilfull man, being vnencombred with false fights, because such a man standeth free in his valour with strength and agilitie of bodie, freely taketh the benefit of nature, fighteth most braue, by loosing no oportunitie, either soundly to hurt his enemie, or defend himselfe, but the other standing for his Defence, vpon his cunning Italian wardes, *Punta reuersa*, the *Imbrocata*, *Stocata*, and being fast tyed vnto these false fightes, standeth troubled in his wits, and nature therby racked through the largenesse or false lyings or Spaces, whereby he is in his fight as a man halfe maimed, loosing the oportunity of times & benefit of nature, & whereas before being ignorant of these false Rapier fightes, standing in the free libertie of nature giuen him by god, he was able in the field with his weapō to answere the valianteſt man in the world, but now being tied vnto that false fickle vncertaine fight, there-

Proofes against the Rapier fight.

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by hath loſt in nature his freedome, is now become ſcarce halfe a man, and euerie boye in that fight is become as good a man as himſelfe.

Ieronimo this gallant was valiant, and would fight indeed, and did, as you ſhall heare. He being in a Coch with a wench that he loued well, there was one *Cheeſe*, a verie tall man, in his fight naturall Engliſh, for he fought with his Sword and Dagger, and in Rapier-fight had no skill at all. This *Cheeſe* hauing a quarrell to *Ieronimo*, ouertooke him vpon the way, himſelfe being on horſebacke, did call to *Ieronimo*, and bad him come forth of the Coch or he would fetch him, for he was come to fight with him. *Ieronimo* preſently went forth of the Coch and drew his Rapier and dagger, put himſelf into his beſt ward or *Stocata*, which ward was taught by himſelfe and *Vincentio*, and by them beſt allowed of, to be the beſt ward to ſtand vpon in fight for life, either to aſſault the enemie, or ſtand and watch his comming, which ward it ſhould ſeeme he ventured his life vpon, but howſoeuer with all the fine Italienated skill *Ieronimo* had, *Cheeſe* with his Sword within two thruſtes ran him into the bodie and ſlue him. Yet the Italian teachers will ſay, that an Engliſhmã cannot thruſt ſtraight with a Sword, becauſe the hilt will not ſuffer him to put the forefinger ouer the Croſſe, nor to put the thumbe vpon the blade, nor to hold the pummell in the hand, whereby we are of neceſſitie to hold faſt the handle in the hand: by reaſon whereof we are driuen to thruſt both compaſſe and ſhort, whereas with the Rapier they can thruſt both ſtraight and much further then we can with the Sword, becauſe of the hilt: and theſe be the reaſons they make againſt the Sword.

FINIS.

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